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**HIS PEOPLE**

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# HIS PEOPLE

BY

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EDWARD GARNETT

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## APOLOGIA

IT is (I think) a general belief, that every writer draws his matter straight from the fountains of his brain, just as a spider weaves his web from his own belly, as naturalists aver. This may be so, especially with folk of much invention and no imaginative power. The makers of Utopias and the like, forecasters of society under socialism, and those who write long novels about the theologic doubts which now and then attack a clergyman, and those who treat the lives of celebrated men made small by lack of comprehension, as objects are belittled seen through the large end of a telescope, no doubt enjoy the gift. Peace and good luck to them, and large editions soon sold out, with profits, and prospective knighthoods, and the respect of all right-thinking men. It may be that which I refer to as invention they style imagination, and if that is so, I am still content to wish them luck, and to repeat that I, in common, as I think, with most of those who write on what they see,

or have seen, setting it out before the public through the medium of the vision of their brain, and from their point of view, are born entirely lacking in both qualities.

Still I believe that, be it bad or good, all that a writer does is to dress up what he has seen, or felt, or heard, and nothing real is evolved from his own brain, except the words he uses, and the way in which he uses them. Therefore it follows, that in writing he sets down (perhaps unwittingly) the story of his life, and as he does so, makes it worth reading only by chronicling all his impressions of the world quite honestly, as if he were alone upon a desert island (as in fact he is) and he were writing on the sand.

Upon this head at least, he need not trouble, for Time is like a strong north wind, which moves the sand upon the shore, and covers up all tracks which human feet have made upon it, however deeply they may seem to mark, no matter if the foot that made them were as perfect as the best Praxiteles designed or as a desert Arab maiden's, henna-dyed and light as a gazelle's.

One wave, of fashion or the like, one little change of language or of taste, and naught



remains, and the blank sheet of sand lies out without a mark upon it, fresh and inviting for another kind of foot to dance upon, and dent it, if it can.

Therefore, oh writers of imagination or invention, or what you choose to call the thing that makes you write your monumental tomes, which fall out from the press, just as in olden times the hot cross buns fell from the oven upon Maundy Thursday night, do not, I pray, scorn men devoid of inspiration or afflatus, and who perforce must see and touch (like Thomas) before they can believe sufficiently, to take in hand the pen. Go on (after the manner of the pampered jades of Asia) and spin your gossamers, making the meshes of your web as fine as those which only dew reveals to mortal eye, stretched like a rigging through the grass, without apology.

In fact, there is no need for any, for it would seem that you (connected, as I think, directly with the cosmic spirit of the world) have in yourselves a faculty which acts like armour, keeping you safe from the attacks of the light cavalry of critics, shutting you up securely in a tower of strength, above the flight of all the arrows ever shot by man.

Why, if invention, or imagination (or what not) is, of itself, a thing apart, and the transmission of it into print causes no pain in parturition, as it were, how happy you must be. All that is wanted is a table and a chair, a ream of paper and a pen or two; these, with your bottle of fine blue-black ink, a modicum of power in the wrist, and perseverance to a limited degree, make you both rich and famous, and what has issued from your brain is never felt, for nature or some other mighty power replaces it, just as the sand upon a tidal river's bank comes back again with the tide's ebb and flow.

You are not torn and twisted, as with a thousand devils struggling to be free, nor can you feel the shame which burns the cheek of those who read in after years what they have written, as it were, against their will; for writing is so damnable a thing that no one (excepting always the Utopia weavers and the rest of those to whom I have referred) sitting down to write is ever certain what it is that he will do, for it may chance of mustard or some other kind of seed, after the fashion of the sower in the Word. A thing which sets one thinking on the curious kind

of crops that farmers must have had to deal with in the Holy Land, when it was time to reap.

And it is true enough, men write against their will, constrained by some fell power, that they know perfectly they should resist, but cannot for their life; just as they say that sometimes women suffering violence have seized their violators round the neck and kissed them fiercely, as though not knowing what they did, or yielding to temptation, just as a writer does when he sees ink convenient to his hand.

With this apology, I venture forth again upon the highway, after the fashion of the far-famed goose of Cantimpalos, which, as the proverb says, came out upon the road to meet the wolf.

R. B. CUNNINGHAME GRAHAM.

ARDOCH, 7 *August*, 1906.



## HIS PEOPLE

FULL twenty years had passed since he had seen the once familiar streets.

Years had gone by—years of hard work, of heat, of long and dreary hours spent in the counting-house in Zacatécas, and in long journeys to Tampico, to Acapulco, and to Mexico. At last, his fortune made, and all the treasure of his youth wasted in making it, he had taken ship to Santander. The unfamiliar sea, the people all so smartly dressed, the ladies finer by far than even were the daughters of the governor in Zacatécas, the strange refinements of the cabins, the ceremonious dinner, the band, the futile games in which the passengers engaged, the endless trivialities of European life, which Europeans have erected into fetishes, to which they bow, making them into gods minted in their own images—struck him as they might strike an Arab brought from his native plains, with feelings of contempt and envy bewilderingly mixed.

In the quiet nights within the Tropics, as he paced up and down beneath the awning upon deck, he thought how would Toledo look on his return. In the wild weather, as the ship neared Spain, he wondered whether he would find it changed. Whilst seated in the smoking-room playing at "tute," as he chewed a black cigar between his teeth, with his thoughts wandering from the game to the disgust of all his partners, he saw the ochre-red Castilian city, wind-swept, austere, and seated on the rocks above the yellow rolling Tagus, as he had seen it as a child.

He thought, "Will it look larger, smaller, be more ruinous; and will the trees upon the Alameda now have grown so much I shall not know them?" and then smiled at himself, knowing Toledo cannot suffer change. How many of his friends would be alive, he wondered, and he pictured to himself the look upon the faces of the men he once had known, and how they would be sure to say, "What, Juan Icázar? Yes, ah yes, the son of Pedro and Maria, may they both rest in peace. We thought you had been dead, man, years ago." Then, as if in a dream, he saw himself entering the shop of old Higinio Guarrázas, just at the corner of the

Calle de las Armas, where as a child he had gazed with wonder at the boxes of sardines, the olives in their bottles, the bales of Iceland codfish, cases of macaroni, and all the wondrous products drawn from countries overseas, which filled the store and made it fairyland.

Of course, Higinio would be there, his bushy whiskers maybe a little greyer, and his thick hair turned white; but there, of course, smoking his cigarette, making his entries in his daybook, whilst the clerks ran about and served the customers; and he remembered that just opposite the shop there stood an archway built by the Moors, the infidels, the enemies both of our faith and God.

All that seemed real to him, for it was stamped upon his brain from childhood, just as the view was stamped that he remembered as he stood upon the terrace below the Puerta del Cambrón, and looked across the suburbs, known as Las Covachuelas and Antequeruela, with their tiled roofs forming long pent-houses of brown. Surely right underneath his feet he still would see El Alfar Blanco, where they made hard white pottery and even porcelain, and the two other potteries where as a child he

played. These were all real, and their foundations deep as the foundations of the world; but the long years in Mexico, the drudgery, the struggle and the strife, the dull hot hours of listless waiting for the evening breeze, merely a bad dream. The long and dusty rides with his gun underneath his thigh, his striped serapé rolled behind the cantle of his saddle, and the stiff, heavily embroidered "poblano" hat upon his head—surely he looked a picture on his horse, but why, he wondered, did the Mexicans all smile and murmur "chapetón" as he passed by—had surely happened to another man. All was unreal, all except the *coup* upon the Stock Exchange, which, following on years of successful business, at length had made him free. But still the steamer always drew nearer day by day to Spain, and he, pacing the deck, thought on the future, for the past he put aside just as one does the oboe note of a mosquito, when one has squashed the piper on the wall. Sometimes his thoughts ran upon old Antonio Lopez, who, he knew, had left the mountains above Santander, poor and unknown, just as he had himself gone from Toledo, and by degrees become enriched and founded the great transatlantic line, in one of whose best steamers he



was coming home. How did old Lopez feel, he thought, when, after years of slaving in the Habana, he at length became possessor of a ship, and how, when in the plaza of his little native town, at last a senator, all had come forth to welcome him with bagpipes, flutes, oxen with wreaths of flowers on their heads, the bishop and the clergy of the diocese, and all bowed down before the golden calf, set up and incarnated in himself. Were not their lives and their careers alike, and might not he, too, be a senator? He saw himself just entering the house of Don Adolfo the apothecary, where, as he knew, at evening time, the doctor, old Guarrázas, some of the canons of the cathedral, the bookseller, and other worthies, used to congregate. Lifting his hat after a ceremonious "*Muy buenas tardes,*" he would say, "By the by, did you know Pedro Icázar, who had his house in Covachuelas, eh?" Then cautiously, "And what of his son Juan, who went out to the Indies—is he alive, think you, or dead of those accursed fevers of the land?" For it is never good to do things with a rush. Then as a grave "Si, señor, Pedro Icázar; I should think so, and his son Juan also," went round the ring, touching his hat, he heard him-

self rejoin, "I am that Juan, much at your service, and at that of honest men."

How glorious it would be thus to revive old memories (he knew the last of his relations long was dead), and better still to say, "Gentlemen, I wish to offer you champagne"; then call for "Codorniu," worth ten francs the bottle, and watch it sparkle in the glasses, as all his old friends' faces kindled with delight.

The other passengers, mostly rich merchants from Habana, Tampico, Cartagena, and from Port Limón, all thought him odd, saying, "Icázar surely had heard bells, but he did not know where." Then they all gave him up, leaving him to his reveries, his silent pacing up and down the deck, and to the reconstruction in his mind of that Toledo which he had known so well—brown, wind-swept, melancholy, proud in her ruin; the widow of the Goths, the Romans, Jews, the Moors, and now neglected by her lord and mourning haughtily aloof, like a fair jewel lost on the floor of a deserted garret, its facets chipped and its whole setting tarnished by decay.

The icy winds of Europe chilled him to the bone, making him shiver in his unsubstantial clothes made for the Tropics, although he, half

with uneasiness and half with pride, remembered in his boyhood he had gone bare-headed in the frosts which grip Toledo in a band of steel, pinching the people in their great barrack-looking houses, where they sat wrapped in cloaks about a pan of charcoal, waiting for the sun. Porpoises gambolled round the ship, making him think upon the buffalo which he had seen out in Chihuáhuá and New Mexico, and as they neared the coast, steamers passed by, exchanging signals, at which the returning "Indianos" looked approvingly, remarking that "The commerce . . . Si, señor . . . was the great lever by means of which men moved the world . . . that is, the commerce and the steam, for after all, where there is commerce there is progress. . . . Si, señor . . . long live the commerce and . . . and the steam." Then they, all having graduated in "the progress" at New York, would order "whiskisoda" and drink to Spain, the steam, the commerce, woman, black eyes, and bull-fighting, and as they drank, unpacked their recollections of the Tropics, and of the ladies they had known in Mazatlán, Salina Cruz (with anecdotes at this point about the Zapotéca girls, mostly apocryphal), Cienfuegos, and the Habana, yes, the

Habana. Ah, what a place! . . . Its half-caste girls quite lost to shame, but still agreeable, with underlinen starched so stiffly, it would, if placed upon the ground, have stood up like a tub. Much as they lauded the strange beverage, pressing it on him as a cure for melancholy, Icázar did not like it, saying it did not make him happy, and cherishing the recollection of a little wine which he remembered in his youth, that came from Villa Cañas, or from Vargas, he did not quite remember which, although he recollected that the women of the latter place used to walk, carrying their shoes, the long two leagues into Toledo, as he expressed it, at the donkey's feet.

At last the Asturian mountains, snow-capped and seeming to be hung between the water and the sky, appeared far-off and cloudy; then by degrees grew nearer, and, the mist lifting, showed the Cantabrian coast, smiling and vine-clad to the shore, with the white villages nestling about the hills; above them chestnut woods, then pines, then masses of grey limestone, which by degrees melted away into the snow quite imperceptibly.

Fishing-boats, with their sails tanned brown

and pointed sharp as a shark's fin when it just rises to the surface following a ship, were scattered here and there ; and soon the long and straggling town of Santandér, the Sardineiro with its bathing-boxes, and the white villas smiling through the trees, roused Juan Icázar to enthusiasm, making the blood course through his veins and his eyes fill with tears.

Once landed on the mole, all was familiar, and yet strange to him. To see white Christians bending under burdens, whilst others ordered them about like negroes, shocked him, accustomed as he was to Mexico and its strict colour line. The carabineers, with their green gloves and well-remembered uniforms struck a note in his heart ; but then again, his native country seemed not to have progressed, and as the sleek mouse-coloured oxen drew the creaking carts with solid wheels which turned with the whole axle, at two miles an hour, his thoughts went back to Zacatécas, with its smart Yankee Milburn waggons drawn by a team of mules. But the harsh guttural cries of fish-hawkers and water-carriers sounded as sweet to him as did a nightingale, reviving memories of home, of childhood, and of the echoing notes which he remembered still, in

his gaunt native town. Nothing seemed changed except himself. Men lounged about, wrapped in their cloaks and with a cigarette-stained hand appearing underneath their chins, holding the folds about their mouths. Ladies all robed in black came from the churches, followed by their maids, and as they passed along the streets the lounging men undressed them with their eyes, murmuring compliments in an undertone which brought the blood into their cheeks and caused their great black eyes to flame, though they appeared unconscious, but treasured secretly each word up in their hearts as a just homage to their charms. In Juan Icazar's ear, his native tongue spoken without the softness with which the racial or climatic influences of the New World endues both branches of the Spanish tongue, seemed harsh and unrefined, but he reflected that his ear was vitiated, and in the north men spoke abominably, but that in his own native town he would hear once again the right Toledan, with its clear utterance, full cadence, and the mysterious something which attaches to a speech when spoken in one's home. The railway-station seemed a little tumbledown, and the time wasted at the ticket-

office needless, and it was strange to see so few advertisements, and those merely of steamship companies catering for emigrants, and now and then of bull-fights, with the cartoons adorned with pictures of some famous dancer, such as La Chirigota, with a man's hat upon her head, her hair brought low upon her forehead, almost covering her ears, and with a look deep-seated in her eyes of gipsy harlotry.

Still he reflected that all this was due to want of "illustration" and bad government, or perhaps he himself, in his long absence, had turned a foreigner, and saw things in a wrong perspective, and, sinking back into his seat, watched the train creep into Las Fraguas, diving into the bosom of the hills, waking the echoes with its whistling, and making cattle, feeding in the fields of clover and lucerne, stop and look lazily out of their beryl-coloured eyes, munching the while, with a green foam upon their lips.

The long delays at stations gave the returning pilgrim opportunity to hear the well-remembered cries of "Water," "Ground nuts," "Milk," and of the people who sold chocolate made by Matias Lopez of the Escorial, and note they had not varied since when, a youth

in a bare third-class carriage, he had been jolted to the port.

Nothing was new except the gum trees, which, rattling in the wind, were planted round the stations, giving an air of an oasis of vulgarity, in the prevailing calm. Slowly the train wound like a snake out of the mountains on to the central plains which, brown and wind-swept, and guarded to the west by distant hills, spread out indefinitely.

At last he felt himself at home. Long strings of peasants, seated upon asses or on mules, were riding to the fields. Under their stiff black hats were tied checked handkerchiefs, the ends of which were knotted, forming a sort of turban, and their brown clothes and cloaks blended as well with the prevailing colour of the plain as does the colour of a rabbit or a hare with a bare stubble field. He saw the water-wheels, turned by a horse blindfolded with a clout, wearily pacing round, and marked the steam rise up from the hot soil, where each revolving pot poured its contents into the trough, from which it flowed upon the ground.

Little by little the land grew browner and more bare, and the white towns upon the hill-tops looked more African.



Night caught the train between Arévalo and Ávila, right in the middle of the Castilian steppes, which, glacial in winter and in the heat a hell, fill all the middle of the land, wind-swept and shut from Europe by great mountain ranges, austere and melancholy as the brown folk they bear. Ávila, with its towers and castellated church, lay sleeping in the moonlight as it had slept for ages in the sun; and then the train, snorting and groaning, set its face up against the Guadarráma, passing through rock-strewn deserts and through pine woods, looking fantastic as the landscape of a dream through the white billowing smoke belched by the engine as it strove hard against the hill. The Escorial, the great grey epic which Felipe el Prudente thought out in his old age, gleamed on its hill like steel, and as the morning light tinged the far mountains of Toledo pink, Madrid, the royal village of the bear and árbutus, just showed against the sky. On every side the plain flowed round it like a great brown sea in which it stood an island, going down straight into the waves, without a suburb stretching out between the country and the town, to act as breakwater.

Short time the homing Toledáno stayed

within its walls, but set his face towards his Mecca on the Tagus, counting the stations as they passed, and meditating on the flight of time, almost in agony between the joy of seeing once again his native town and terror that he should find all altered and himself forgotten by his friends.

The stations passed as slowly as had the years in Mexico, until the train arrived at Algodór, the junction where the branch from Aranjuéz joins the line from Madrid, and then indeed he felt he was near home, and, rising from his seat, paced up and down the carriage just as a sailor walks upon the deck.

Villages that he thought he had forgotten passed before his eyes.

Churches that he had dreamt of far away were there to welcome him.

All was unchanged ; even the cattle feeding on the plain he recognized, knowing them for the fierce Veraguas breed, and feeling half inclined to shake his cloak at them as the train slowly jolted by.

Then, like a whitish cloud, upon a hill, Toledo burst upon his view. Clustering like bees about their queen, the houses nestled in the rocks beneath the great Alcázar, grim and four-

square, topping the craggy height. Nothing had changed: the tall cathedral spire still rose into the air, and still the Tagus flowed beneath the walls in the deep rocky pass.

All was familiar, and he recognized it all without an effort, standing entranced, with a black burned-out cigarette between his lips, as the train steamed into the town.

Calling a cab, he told the driver, with the air of one who knew the place, to take him to the Hotel del Pino, and was answered with a stare: "The Hotel del Pino was shut up ten years ago," he said, with the astonished look of one who hears a man allude familiarly to long-forgotten things.

"Well, then, to the boarding-house of the Miss Figueroas, in the Calle de la Cruz."

"The Figueroas have been dead for years," the man replied. "The last, she whom the rest always referred to as La Niña, though she was sixty-five at least, is living still out in a town they call Navalmorál de Pusa, but miles away from here."

Icázar told the man to take his things up to the best hotel; then, hurt, after the way of those who, having waited long for friends, find that they miss the tryst, walked up the dusty road

on foot, feeling that he had never left the place, and that the conduct of the Figueroas and the proprietor of the hotel was quite unpardonable. Decaying omnibuses drawn by mules, rattling and jingling on the stones, tore past and covered him with dust; and by the roadside women sat, with large red jars of water, covered with a board on which were set out glasses and lemons and a small pile of cakes sugared and stuck about with caraways, and looking like a quoit.

Instinctively he stopped upon the bridge, which is defended by the Puerta del Cambrón, and dropped a stone into the swirling river underneath, just as he used to do when sent on errands twenty years ago, to pass away the time. It seemed to take an age in its descent, and its dull splash awoke him from his dream, and as he gazed at the wide-spreading circles which it made in the yellow waters of the stream, a voice behind him fell upon his ear. He heard the well-remembered words "For God," and as he turned felt certain he would see one of the beggars he recalled out of the past; but though the man was dressed in red-brown rags but half concealed by an old tattered cloak, his

face was unfamiliar, and he had almost murmured, "God assist you," but, altering his mind, gave a peseta as a sort of welcome to himself on his returning home. The blessings showered upon his head reminded him that he was in a land where, though most men give alms, none give profusely, and he walked on, feeling he was a stranger in the country of his birth, though he remembered every stone of the rough pavement of the bridge. Boys followed him, proffering their services to guide him through the town. Indignantly he shook them off, muttering he knew Toledo better far than they, but as he spoke he recognized his speech had altered in the long sojourn in America, and differed much from theirs. Breasting the steep and stony street, he stopped to breathe beneath the gate where, as tradition says, the skull of the alcalde who betrayed his trust, and outraged two poor women he found wandering in the fields, is still preserved behind the keystone of the arch. He looked at it as a man looks at an old friend, and to his joy saw that the sculptured stone still bore the figures of the women, with a new severed head between them, set up to mark that a good governor had

done them justice, and placed the record of his act in stone to witness to all time.

Then as he passed into the little Alameda, just on the edge of the high cliff which overhangs the stream, he looked up at the trees and saw with pleasure they had grown taller and more bushy, patting their trunks, as if he thought that they could feel and answer his caress.

Then, leaning on the railings, with his arms folded and with his burnt-out cigarette between his lips, he gazed upon the well-remembered view. All was unchanged. Antequeruela underneath and Covachuelas struggling up the hill, seemed to look up and greet him with a smile. True that the houses had grown smaller as it seemed, and looked more weather-stained and more dilapidated. One that he turned to as by instinct met his eye, with the great vine on which had grown the sweetest grapes in all the world still shadowing the door. The yellow-ochre coloured walls, stained on the weather side with green, seemed not to have grown older, and the corral for chickens at the back, topped, just as he remembered, with a growth of marigolds, stood baking in the sun. The Alfar Blanco lay below his feet, the smoke just

curling from the kiln, and with a line of brush-wood-laden donkeys waiting at the gate, as they had waited twenty years ago, and just as patiently.

All was unchanged, and he, getting up from his seat, took out another cigarette, and, lighting it, resolved before he went to his hotel to visit some of his old friends and to surprise them by his knowledge of the town, before he told his name.

Just as a horse let loose upon the plains without a moment's hesitation strikes the trail for home, so did Icazar half mechanically take the short cut which leads up the steep, stony Calle del Alfilerito, passing the door of the old building, once a mosque, then synagogue, now turned into a church and duly consecrated, known as "El Cristo de la Luz." So much at home he felt that he would not have been astonished had he met boys, he knew were grandfathers or dead, come shouting out of school. The stony lane led out into the square, with its long rows of shops on a raised causeway under colonnades. The diligence for Vargas was just starting, crammed, as he recollected it of old, with peasant women, all carrying bundles, and with a priest crushed

in between them, smoking and mopping at his face with a red handkerchief. The mules and the apocalyptic horses, harnessed with ropes, so thin it seemed they only stood by balance or by leaning up against each other, had not changed, and the unshaved and roguish-looking driver with his short jacket of black plush with silver buttons, as he sat on his seat, his foot just toying with the brake, and his hands grasping an enormous bunch of reins, appeared identical.

Boys selling papers two or three days old screamed like macaws upon a field of maize, and half the population seated on the seats enjoyed the sun, wrapped in their cloaks to shield them from the breeze which whistled from the hills. Icázar, smiling, recognized his native town at once, where on one side you burn under the torrents of the sun, and freeze upon the other, and, without knowing that he did so, turned up the collar of his overcoat to keep away the wind.

He struck into a little street which, as he knew, would take him to the Calle de las Tiendas, and as he walked, cut through the archways mounting the causeway to save the angles, after the fashion of the place. He



walked through well-remembered lanes, by Moorish arches, windows with wooden lattices and medieval ironwork, and passing houses whose heavy wooden soffits, carved by Mudéjares, were monuments of art, left to decay and crumble in the fierce sun of summer and the winter's frost. Used as he was to Mexico, and to its cleanliness, and to the air of wealth which marks its towns, he felt a shock at first at the neglect of all the buildings, which he remembered just in the same condition in his youth; but then, as he saw foreigners, with books beneath their arms, stop and admire, with that half-shamefaced look a man assumes when stopping to observe a building in a foreign town, began to feel an air as of an owner, and to half wish to step across and tell them all about the place, and what there was to see.

Without the least mistake he came out in the Calle de las Armas, crossing a dozen little streets, so steep you scarce could scale them, so narrow that a mule stopping to unload its bales of charcoal at a door entirely stopped the way. Guarrázas' shop was there, with the inscription "Ultramarinos," almost obliterated, but still visible. Holding his breath, he gazed at it, marking the bustle round the door of peasant

women, whilst shopmen stood and talked to customers, just as in days gone by.

Entering the shop, he asked for Don Higinio, and a smart shopman answered, "Guarrázas, that was the man from whom the actual owner bought the business. . . . Yes, I remember now, he died some years ago out at his native place, near Talavera de la Reina; his widow, too, I hear is dead . . . and . . ." Icázar thanked him, and, hurrying from the shop, sat down upon a seat to meditate and smoke. And as he pondered upon this thing and on that, the elementary facts which lie forgotten, till a shock, such as he had received, forces them rushing to our minds, crowded upon him, and he thought, "Poor old Guarrázas, may God have pardoned him, he might have waited till I came, after so many years." Then as he sat, still smoking, over his head, with such a sudden shaking of the tower it seemed about to fall, the great cracked bell, which he remembered you could hear as far as Algodór, struck the half-hour, astonishing but still delighting him, as it had never failed to do when as a child he waited for its chime upon the way to school. He took it as a welcome, just as a man may clutch a superstition to his heart

without believing it, and rising from his seat, half thought of dropping in on the apothecary, but a vague fear restrained him, and to put off the time, he strolled into the church to see if it was changed.

He gave some coppers to the beggars at the door, and as a mummified old woman drew aside the mat he passed into the church. Half furtively he dipped his hand into the holy water stoop and crossed himself, muttering it was a superstitious act, yet glad to yield to it, for a true Christian ought to testify, even though God for some wise purpose of His own has not vouchsafed him faith.

Through the dim aisles there came a sound of voices, which filtered through the piers just as the gurgling of a brook comes through the trees in some great forest, making the traveller turn to it, by instinct, without the wish to drink.

In the round chapel underneath the tower, the Mass of the Mozárabes was going on, with a scant congregation listening to it, the women sitting squatted on the ground, and one or two old men looking on listlessly and muffled to the eyes.

Icázar, standing at the door, turning his hat

between his hands, after the way of an infrequent worshipper, recalled the ceremony, just as a man recalls the details of a dream seen through the mist of sleep.

The silver bells rang out to scare the fiends, who, hovering in mid-air, are on the watch to seize a soul when the chance offers, and if the priest should be remiss in offering up his prayers. All the strange ceremonies and curious rites so piously preserved in their captivity among the Moors by Gothic Christians in the south, were faithfully rehearsed. As the priest mumbled at his Mass, and as Icázar listened to him and the strange music which accompanied his prayers, the story of the strife in the old times between the northern and the southern rituals came crowding to his mind. Dimly he recollected he had heard his mother say that the thing came to trial in the great plaza of the town, when, after prayer and a due search for amulets was made, both missals were committed to the flames to test their holiness. The expectant crowd stood round, each prophesying victory for his own Mass book, and certain of success.

At the first touch of the consuming fire the Gregorian Psalter leaped out on the stones,

and lay upon the street. All its adherents shouted victory, but still the fire burned on, and at the bottom of the pile, covered with ashes, but by God's grace and by the virtue of the Oriental patience, which perhaps it had acquired in its long sojourn with the Moors, there lay the book of the Mozárabes unharmed and sanctified by the fierce trial it had undergone, of its authority.

When the priest reached his "*Ita missa est,*" and the scant congregation had quietly dispersed, Icázar left the church, following the street known as the passage of the Wooden Man, to the apothecary's, refusing as a slight the proffered help of several street boys, who, when they spy a stranger in the dark lanes which in Toledo bore through the town like worm-holes in a cheese, all cluster round like flies.

Hardly observing where he walked, but going straight as does a pigeon through the sky, he came upon the shop. A jar of leeches hung beside the door, and on the shelves were the same pots of Talavera ware painted in blue with a great Austrian double-headed eagle, lettered in Latin "*Cardamomum*" or "*Savina,*" which as a child had made him wonder how any single man could know as much as he felt

sure that Don Adolfo knew and keep it in his head.

The selfsame smell of senna met him at the door, mixed with valerian and with dead flies, which made the ointments that his friend prepared send out a stinking savour, and which of old had sickened yet attracted him, as he passed by the house.

A row of chairs stood, as they used to stand, ranged up against the wall, some seated with rough cowskin, shiny with use and with a few white hairs still clinging to the hide, and some with tapestry.

Coming up to the door half warily, after the fashion of a man who has received a check and has his mind made up that it is possible fate still has blows in store to deal him unawares, Icázar asked, "Is Don Adolfo disengaged?" scanning the pimply-faced assistant, who was sitting on a stool, with some disquietude. "Don Atanasio, I suppose you mean," the man replied. "He has just lain down to take his siesta, but in an hour or two you can come back again, and I am sure that he will undertake your case if you are indisposed."

"Where, then, is Don Adolfo?" Icázar said, but diffidently, foreseeing that he must be dead,

and that another of the links with the Toledo which once had been his home had parted, and that he had returned to be a stranger in the town where he had passed his youth.

“Exactly where is difficult to tell,” rejoined the assistant in a strong Seville accent, and with an air as of a humourist, after the fashion of his kind. “For years before his death the worthy man never communicated, heard Mass, confessed, or in the least complied with any of the duties of the Church, so that, as Father Perez thinks—he comes at times to our ‘tertulia’ in the shop—poor Don Adolfo may lie howling. But—we men of science ridicule such things, putting our faith in Darwin and the great Draper, he who wrote ‘Conflict with Science and Religion,’ as I am sure you know.”

Thanking the humourist, Icazar hurried from the shop and plunged into the streets. All day he roamed about, seeking his friends and finding none of them, knocking at houses where in times past the doors appeared to open of themselves before his knocking ceased. No one remembered him but one old lady, whom as a child he faintly recollected, and she had turned half-imbecile with age, taking him for his father, asking affectionately after his mother

and hoping she was well. At nightfall he returned to his hotel, and, dining miserably alone, his joy at coming home turned to despair with disappointment and with loneliness, he half determined to go back to Mexico by the first ship that sailed.

His dinner over, with a cigar, which tasted bitter in his mouth, between his teeth, he roamed about the town half-aimlessly, passed by the theatre, and after going in found the first act half over; and as he gazed about, watching the people in the boxes and the stalls, he fell into a dream.

All his past life and all his present being seemed somehow welded; the world was empty, and he alone in it, wandering about and looking for a friend. Coffins and tombstones strewed the streets, which all seemed cemeteries, and he alone went sadly up and down reading the epitaphs.

He heard the singers vaguely, and all the actors had their faces veiled, whilst a thick mist covered the people in the boxes and the pit, and hid them from his sight. All seemed his enemies or, at the least, unsympathetic to him, and nothing he could do helped him to clear away the vapour from his brain, which kept



him separate from every one he saw, in an unfriendly world.

Then, without knowing how it came about, a change came over him, and, looking at the stage, he saw the curtain had been lowered and that the audience was going out to smoke, leaving him sitting in the middle of the stalls, alone and solitary.

He sat half dozing in his seat, tired with his rambles up and down the town, and as he sat, scanning the curtain, lying back against the seat, he felt the sense of loneliness had gone and that the world still held some people whom he knew, without a barrier of intervening mist to keep them separate.

For instance, the tall gallant in the cloak, with his fair curls upon his shoulders, his pointed beard, trunk hose, and shoes with round rosettes which looked too big for them, was an old friend whom he had known from childhood upwards, and understood him well. His sword, with a long wrinkle in the sheath, which, had it been smoothed out, must certainly have made it more than a fathom from the pommel to the chape, he recognized with joy.

He thought the look upon the gallant's face, which wreathed his cheeks into a mortary kind

of smile, as when the stucco gapes upon a wall, was one of welcome, and as he answered it himself it seemed to fade away into the paint, as if the smiler was contented, feeling the tension of the muscles might relax now he had found his friend.

The lady in the dragged satin gown, which once had been rose-pink, but now had faded to a sort of yellow-ochre, seemed to be bowing to him, keeping her eyes the while right in the middle of the tall gallant's back, and smiling roguishly.

The fluffy dogs, of no discovered breed, seeming a cross between a badly-bred King Charles and a fox terrier, which stood between the gallant and the dame, uncertain which to go to, being repelled on one side by the terrible long sword and on the other by the whip which sprang directly from the flesh of the fair lady's white-gloved hand and dangled in the air, he knew familiarly. What power prevented him from stretching out his hand to run it gently down their neatly frescoed backs, he knew not, feeling so certain that he owed them a caress for their fidelity.

Well did he know the palfrey of a light lemon colour, which a young page in a round cap and

feather, bright scarlet trunks and orange hose, was holding by the reins. He heard it neighing, although no sound came from its widely opened mouth, and he felt tempted to exclaim, "Fair youth, take me the courser to his stall, water and feed him; for, look you, he has waited in the sun since I was little taller than yourself, and must a-weary be."

He knew a play was going on upon a stage set in the open air, on which four men wrapped in their cloaks, with swords like torches brandished in their hands, fought to defend or carry off a damsel, who, with her hair dishevelled, lay like a bag of rags upon the ground, whilst her distressed and aged father wrung his venerable hands and gazed upon the clouds.

The gallant and the lady and the page he knew were looking at the play, although their eyes were otherwise employed, and fixed on vacancy. The band, which, squatted on the ground, discoursing music of the spheres—through the unsympathetic medium of a long Arab-looking flageolet played by a pallid youth, with wind-swollen cheeks and eyes that started from his head, and a round drum on which a negro lad was beating furiously—

ravished his ears with a strange melody which none but he could hear.

A town which simulated a Toledo drawn from phantasy, with an enormous range of snow-clad mountains towering up above its walls, surmounted by deep orange-coloured clouds, he half divined, half recollected rather than actually saw, was in the background, and underneath its walls sat a gay company at cards, whilst, with a touch of realism, quite in Velazquez' manner, two or three beggars stood behind them as they played, and criticized the game.

Then, as the curtain rose, and his old friends were rolled above his view, he slowly rubbed his eyes, and opening them again looked out upon the world and found it empty. Then muttering, "All dead; of all the people I had hoped to see, these are the only friends to welcome me," he walked into the street. Following the Calle de la Plata half mechanically, he walked down to the river, and, standing on the bridge, leaned on the parapet and gazed into the stream.

A chilly wind blew feathery clouds across the moon. Algól was rising and the Three Maries, with their gleaming lamps cut through the

blackness of the night as diamonds cut glass, joining the earth and sky together with a long beam of light. The battlemented walls outlined against the sky seemed drawn in charcoal, and as the traveller stood leaning on the bridge the Tagus thirstily lapped up against the piers, whilst on its surface came a murmuring as of choked voices striving to be heard, which seemed to greet him, as if the Romans, Arabs, and the Goths pitied his loneliness, and were stretching out their hands.

## A BOTANIST

THE book cost but a shilling on a barrow in a side street of a provincial town. The subject of it, botany, that gentle science, so fit for bruised and disappointed minds.

In it, the quondam owner had inscribed her name, Matilda Hutton, adding "her booke," perhaps to show her erudition, or perhaps in play. Apparently she lived in Bath, the refuge for old maids and generals who never handled troops but from the windows of a club, for on a little yellowing ticket it was set forth that Pickering & Son sold books, both new and second hand, at Bridge Street, opposite the Wells.

A gentle soul, Matilda, one feels sure, and one that probably had been, so to speak, still-born from her birth, as far as passion is concerned; or maybe, she had had her brief unhappy passage in her youth, and been deceived, and then shut up her soul, pouring her love out on a cat or Blenheim spaniel, and

falling back on botany, the all-heal of old maids. I take it that she was a most undoubted, right old maid, by virtue of her careful handwriting, her notes and her corrections of the press, written so delicately, that they seem half clandestine, and an apology for her continuance in life. Besides, between the pages of the book, which is itself a trifling and compendious affair, with blurry woodcuts of the plants (the Flora of our Isles), wild flowers were laid in press. Perhaps she called the book (companion of her rambles, her scientific vade-mecum and her joy) "my *hortus siccus*"; for all the hay, which once was leaves and petals, all instinct with life, but now as miserable and as out of joint with what they were, as are the birds, distorted by a stuffer in a glass case in some museum, not ghosts but tortured souls, and smelling of some disinfectant, has a small docket with its Latin name. Thus meadow-sweet, which still exhales a ghostly scent of its sweet self, and is labelled "the *Spiræa ulmaria*," as it should be, no doubt, in catalogues of plants; Speedwell, which becomes *Veronica officinalis*; and Love-lies-bleeding (as perhaps hers did up to her dying day) under the style of *A. caudatus*; are so transmogrified

that if they met in some old garden in a country farm, they would not know each other, unless some kindly creature, such as the writer was herself, had introduced and put them at their ease. Not that such gardens nowadays are to be found, for all the plants with their old English names have lost their modesty, and smack of some emporium in a town, and lengthy catalogue.

I take it that the Latin was Matilda's joy, but that she loved the flowers for themselves. This, the floss silk which still confines them, and the thin leaves of tissue paper, to save the pages of the precious book and keep the flowers fresh as long as possible, most amply testify. Besides, the scientific names apart, the flowers she dried are all such as she must have loved and gathered in her walks, in the green leafy lanes.

Campion and eyebright, agrimony, with winter-green, St. John's wort, spearmint and tormentil, with holygrass and herb of grace (called, as she says, by some, countryman's treacle), prunella, gentian, moneywort, and viper's bugloss, of which she says, "I found this plant at Kenilworth, it grows just in the wall above the tiltyard," all witness to her taste.



Just fifty years ago she took her walks about the woodlands and the lanes, her book in hand and dressed after the fashion of the times, in a grey linsey-woolsey skirt, kept up from trailing on the ground by an elaborate system of silk cords. Her hair dressed low and covering her ears, and at the back neatly disposed beneath her hat in a loose net of black chenille, with her short gloves of brown or puce-colour laced up the back by a white tasselled string, gave her a look, even when all such garments were in vogue, of being out of fashion and ill-dressed, but not ridiculous.

Her book in hand, and an umbrella, which I feel sure was bulgy and had lost the india-rubber band which should have kept it elegantly furled, and with that air of diffidence that in those days was indispensable to all unmarried women not much blessed with money or good looks, she took her walks abroad. I feel her lonely in her life, living in lodgings, or in a family of serious disagreeable folk who, with the best intentions upon earth, rendered her wretched now and then, and sent her out for refuge, searching for flowers she never could have found. Herb-paris very likely was her dream, or Park Leaves, which

she sought diligently, as knights sought the Grail, both in and out of season, hearing no doubt of them from herbalists, or reading in the press, they had been found at Taunton, or near Maryport, or Pevensey, or in the district of Menteith, perhaps in Lundy Island, or in some place quite inaccessible to one of modest means.

I like to fancy her straying on the roads with a tin box for specimens hung by a green silk cord across her shoulders, her book in hand, her bulgy sunshade tucked beneath her arm, and with her porcelain coloured eyes, shaded by spectacles of neutral tint, which she had varied year by year from her youth upwards (as the young Parthians changed their bows according to their strength), wide open, but not seeing very much or too acutely, and with an air of having lacked advancement from the first day she entered upon life. But still, a happy soul, as commonly are those born without guile; wearing her happiness, the chiefest boon that nature gives to man, quite unassumingly, feeling instinctively that to flaunt a quality so rare, would be unkind to ordinary men and smack of cruelty. She must have been contented, although at times the curious

injustices and ills that an all-seeing Providence permits, may have astounded her, and set her pondering on the lot of those less blessed than she, who had no book of botany to solace and amuse, but passed their time in sickness or in toil; and as she mused on this thing or on that, the tears would well into her eyes so that she readily mistook gentian for gromwell, muddled up golden-rod and agrimony, and wrote down entries in her book which only that explains. But yet these moments of inquietude and doubt must have been fugitive, for as a botanist she saw that He who made the flowers in their degrees, inspiring, as it seemed, Linnæus and the rest of those his botanists to classify and set them in their books, must have loved all He made, and at the last no doubt, right would prevail, and so she praised His name. Then, calling to her Blenheim spaniel, for I am sure she had one, she would go into the woods, mildly excited and as eager for the day as is a fisherman when, in the morning, seated in his punt, he throws in ground bait, regulates his float, and settles down to fish. The dog with its large paws and flapping ears, stump tail and back as mottled as a calf's, loved but despised her,

after the fashion of its race ; coming back to her call just when it liked, and asking for applause. Those were red-letter days, and she has marked them in the margins of her book, setting forth briefly (but without method) everything she did. "Found a small cistus (yellow) on the chalk . . . hemp agrimony (cannabinaceæ) grows by a marsh near Ibblesworth, a charming graceful plant ; wonderful order, the compositæ . . . sunset too beautiful for words," rounding her observations off with a quatrain from Herbert or from Quarles.

So did these simple joys (I think) sustain her in her life, as they do many subcutaneous pantheists who, unknown to themselves, unite their souls to nature in the fields as naturally as dragon-flies, which as they flit about above the grass with the sun falling on their gauzy wings seem happiness itself. No doubt these halcyon days were far apart, and the dull life of one in narrow circumstances and with few friends, for one so tender as the writer of the notes in the thin faint Italian hand could not have had a widespread circle, does not bring joy except of a subdued, almost clandestine, kind. Still, very likely in the quiet town, the few who knew her loved, though they half-

despised, her, thinking her botany a weakness, when it was really the strength that gave her spirit to face life. It is not probable that even in that science, which the old maid forlorn, in every age, has made her own, she attained a great proficiency.

Linnæus, though as she says his scheme was "artificial," seems to have been a favourite, for opposite the *Ulex Europæus*, she observes, "This is the plant which in full bloom, in all its glory on a common, impelled the great Linnæus to shed tears. . . . I, too, have wept on seeing it in flower."

At times she stumbles on the harder words, and sets down "monohypogyneæ" when it is evident that "monoperigyneæ" was really in her mind; but trifles such as that do not impair enthusiasm, either in botany or in any other cause.

Her life was simple, of necessity, although I cannot fancy it as being otherwise had she had millions, still without doubt it would have pleased her to have money in her purse when an impostor followed her and begged. Sometimes, when down a street, a herd of oxen trotted to their doom, she must have shuddered, thinking that things were out of joint,

and longed for money to redeem them from their fate, and to provide a field in which, happy and peaceful, they could ruminate their lives. Lost dogs and homeless cats, larks in a cage and rabbits in a trap, sore wrung the heart that knew itself without a place in the economy of man, making her lift her voice in faltering parable, knowing it was not womanly to teach. Near fifty, I should think, her health grew weaker and her walks more circumscribed, and by degrees she sank into that feebleness which sometimes wears away the lonely and neglected, as a flower wastes away from lack of tenderness and care, and withers at the root.

What was her ending? That is to me unknown, although I judge it peaceful, and of the sort we call, unkindly, a release. Her little property, if she had any, served but to pay her lonely funeral. Her much-loved book perhaps was sold with a job lot of tracts and homilies.

I fear that no one placed a bunch of myosotis on her grave, which possibly lies desolate without a headstone, a mere green mound covered with daisies, and with the grass all eaten up by moss.

So I take leave of her, having no idea in

what green churchyard, with its dark lush grass, its time-defying yew, its lich-gate, cock-topped steeple, and tall clump of rook-filled elms, she lies. Still I am certain she sleeps well, forgotten by her friends and leaving for her only mourner but the spaniel, whose dumb grief most likely was unmarked and comforted by none; her treasured book, the one memorial of her life. It may be, though, that in the lanes round Bath, the flowers miss something, for surely none can gather them so tenderly as she who loved them all, and never sinned against them or their lives, except by giving them their Latin names when she embalmed them in the *hortus siccus* of her heart.

## SIGNALLED

THE Casino rooms were crowded. French, English, Poles, Russians, and an occasional Japanese, looking just like a monkey who had escaped from freedom in the woods and voluntarily had put the chains of trousers and of coats about his limbs, all jostled in the throng. Above them hung the concentrated scent of all the perspirations of their different races, mingled with every essence that the perfumer's art affords to mitigate the odours which humanity distils. All were well dressed, and eighteen centuries of culture and of care had culminated in making every one alike. Thus all spoke French, of course with varying accents; but as they all read the same books, had the same thoughts, and wore the selfsame clothes, the accident of accent did not separate them, and they formed one immense, well-scented family as to exteriors, though with their hands all secretly raised against each other, and their tongues wagging ceaselessly in calumny,



just as a bulrush wags by the edge of some old mill-race, half filled up with mud.

All round the tables men and women stood, pushing and elbowing, and with their eyes fixed on the money on the cloth, adoringly, as it had been the Holy Grail and they all vowed to search for and to grasp it, at the peril of their souls.

Men who at home were magistrates and pillars of a church, or members of some county council, gazed at the *demi-mondaines* as they went to and fro brushing against the players to attract attention, with their eyes aflame or with a swinish puckering of their lips which spoke of lust unsatisfied, not from religious principles, but from the fear of spies and interfering friends.

They eyed the women just as a starving dog looks at a butcher's shop, sideways and lurkingly, for fear a blow may fall upon him, out of some quarter unforeseen. Smartly dressed women looked at their sisters of the *demi-monde* half with dislike half with approval, as if they somehow understood that they, although they were transgressors of trades-union rules, were helping them in their life's strife with man; whilst others with the colour rising in their

cheeks pressed up against them as they passed, just as cats press against a chair, meeting their eyes with a bold comprehending stare. Remote from all the rest in a cane rocking-chair there sat a girl, thin, dark, and dressed quite quietly, so quietly that at first sight you might have taken her for a young married woman who had got separated from her friends and had sat down to rest.

Her high-heeled shoes just tapped upon the ground as the chair rocked, and as it balanced to and fro revealed her stockings half way up the calf, so fine and worked so open, that it appeared the hair upon the flesh might pass between the stitching, just as a little fish escapes through the fine meshes of a net.

Men passed before her, in the half-sneaking and half-swaggering way that men assume before a woman whom they have held between their arms a night or two ago, and whom they dare not recognize in public, although they want the world to see that they are well acquainted, and in its censure half applaud the fact. Their hands involuntarily just touched their hats, and as they looked an inch or two above her head murmured a greeting, and then straightening their legs they fell into a strut, as

of a bull-fighter who has been nearly caught by the bull's horns, and wants the crowd to think he is not frightened as he edges to the limits of the ring. She gave her salutation by a half rising of her eyebrows, and a faint smile, half of amusement and half contempt, just flickered on her lips, as some one with his wife or daughter on his arm suddenly flushed or paled and looked with interest at the chandelier as he passed opposite her chair. Callow and fledgling youths boldly saluted her, colouring as they did so to their hair, whilst grave and decorated men just raised their eyes, and fat provincials wildly plunged and bolted at the sight of her, just like young horses faced suddenly in a deep lane by the fierce rattle of a motor-car.

Still nothing in her dress or manner was unlike that of a hundred other women in the rooms, as she sat quietly at the receipt of custom, watching her various acquaintances as they passed by give by their guilty looks the lie both to the faith and the morality they held, and which, no doubt, she held herself as sacred, and as fixed as are the poles, although she saw them outraged in her person twenty times a week, just as in Spain, 'tis said, that a society

founded to protect the lower animals, finding itself in difficulties, arranged a bull-fight to increase its funds and clear away its debts.

But as she sat indifferent, waiting what fate should send her, to her amazement, another girl, but little younger than herself, sat down beside her, and with "*Il fait tray sho nais-cepars,*" fell into conversation with her as easily as if they had been friends.

The girl, who knew the world, glanced at her quickly, half thinking that the stranger came from some island in the Ægean Sea, but saw at once her island lay to the north, and that she had addressed her in pure innocence of heart.

Though she had often seen fair English girls, dressed in short skirts, boisterous in manner, fresh-coloured and half manlike in their ways, striding along as if their knees would burst their petticoats, this was the first time she had met or spoken to one, and the experience somehow brought the blood into her cheeks.

"Yes; it is hot," she said, and stole a glance half of amazement, half approbation, at the fresh English girl, who seated by her side seemed quite unconscious of the difference in their lives and talked so naturally and in such curious

French. She marked her sunburned hands, gloveless and strong as those of a young man, and, made observant by the manner of her life, saw she was pretty at a glance, although her clothes were ugly and her fair hair all gathered in a knot. As she thought upon this thing and on that, and on the shielded life of the fair English girl, so little younger than herself, and on her own, a flush rose on her face as she perceived that she was shy before the other's innocence and want of knowledge of the world. At first the conversation languished, till the stranger, who had sat down with so much lack of ceremony beside her, looking her over with wide-open eyes, said, "I liked the look of you, as I was straying up and down, looking out for my mother, who had got lost whilst I was watching the roulette. You looked so pretty, and you are well dressed, you know you are, and so does every one, all the men look at you, when they pass by, just as a schoolboy at a cake in a shop-window. How foolish they all are."

Used to all kinds of compliments point-blank, none that she ever had received, in all her life, had put her to such difficulty, and once again she stole a look at her fair complimenter's face to reassure herself that she was really as innocent

as she appeared to be. "Well dressed," she murmured, "well, any woman likes to be well dressed." To such a commonplace of femininity no answer was required beyond a simple affirmation, and a look of admiration at the clothes.

"Why, what a lot of men you know!" the English girl exclaimed, as counts and viscounts whom she knew by name walked by, as they sat talking, staring a little at the strange companionship of the two girls, all making a half recognition as they passed. "Why is it, none of them take off their hats—I thought that Frenchmen always were polite?"

Then as she got no answer, but a tapping of her companion's heels upon the floor, and a faint blush as of annoyance at her words, fearing she had offended her acquaintance, whom she already had begun to admire on account of her nice clothes, and evident knowledge of the world, she said, just as a schoolboy might have said, "It's awful hot in here. Would you mind going out into the air, and we can sit and talk?" The other, like a person in a dream, got up and followed her, and the two girls walked through the crowd, the English girl quite unconcerned, pushing her way, after the fashion of a forward player in a football team, smiling and only

anxious to get out into the air. The other, red and uncomfortable, but hypnotized by the frank manners and good faith of her she followed, hardly knew where she was until she found herself seated in a cane chair upon the terrace, and heard her guide say, "Well, this is better than the stuffy room."

From the Casino came the hum of voices, and points of light seemed to break through the windows, and a faint smell of perspiration and stale scent defiled the atmosphere as it came floating up to where they sat. A breeze sprang up and cleared away the fleecy clouds before the moon, whose rays, half deadened by the glare of the electric lamps upon the terrace, seemed to be concentrated shyly on the magnolia trees which formed the background of the artificial scene, falling on their metallic-looking leaves, which it subdued and turned to plates of silver in its light. Moths hung about the great electric lamps, like men about a courtesan, and seemed to swim in the long beam of light which issued from the globes. Sometimes they flew against the glass with a dull furry noise, and then fell stunned and lay upon the paths, with their wings fluttering, until some high-heeled shoe, just peeping out from underneath a cataract

of lace, crushed them to pulp upon the stones, or carried off their bodies sticking to the sole.

Silence fell on the girls as, walking to the balustrade, they stood and looked over the wide white road, across the lawn set with its bunches of white pampas-grass and of euonymus, upon the sea, which stretched out cool and clean and undefiled even by all the tawdriness of the Casino and its lights. Up from the shore there came a long-drawn sigh as if the waves had brought to land the last expiring breath of some lost sailor as they swirled upon the beach. The light air stirred the curls upon the foreheads of the girls, and the mysterious companionship of youth drew them together without words making them feel a bond of sympathy.

Tears stood in the dark eyes of the French girl, she did not quite know why, and something seemed to force her to bestow her confidence upon the girl who stood beside her, although she felt it would be useless, as she could never understand.

As she stood hesitating, the other, seeing her tears, caught at her hands and said, "I say, whatever is the matter? I am so sorry. Tell us about it, it will do you good. Is it about any of those bounders who grinned at you, and did not raise their hats?"



The other looked at her, and, struggling to keep back her tears, said, "No, no, not about any man, I hate them all . . . that is, I am not sure . . . I think one is not quite so horrible as all the rest—but then I have no right to talk to you, so innocent, about such things." She felt the hand of her companion tighten on her own, and all her sorrows running from her heart ; her prostituted youth, the recollection of her home, perhaps the thought of the one man less horrible than were the others, forced her to speak and lay her head upon the shoulder of the mysterious friend, who had come as it were out of the depths to comfort her.

As she was struggling to choke down her tears and speak, and as the English girl stood wondering, but sympathetic and expectant, clasping her hand in hers, a strong high voice broke through the stillness of the night.

"Ethel, my dear," it said, "where have you got to? We have been looking for you for the last hour, and father is so cross." The girls just pressed each other's hands, and separated, as ships which have but signalled may be parted by a mist, without the time to make out either their numbers or the ports from which they hail.

## LA ZAGALA

I WENT once into the Cathedral of Burgos and paid to have the curtain drawn from before the figure of a most striking and realistic crucifix. Beside me stood a countryman dressed in his sheepskin coat, and with a blanket striped in brown and white over his shoulder; in his hand a staff. I saw him cross himself and fall upon his knees, whilst from his face ran drops of sweat. He gazed with the fixed eyes of faith, and as the curtain was whisked hurriedly across the crucifix, drawn by a bored, yet merry-looking acolyte, he rose again and murmured "It is finished." Perhaps, with the interior vision, he had seen the crucifixion, and had felt and suffered with his Lord. Again, it may have been he had felt nothing, and been but hypnotized by gazing on the Christ. Into these mysteries of the human soul the thinking man looks with reluctance, if he is wise, for it may be that looking, he may chance upon reflections in his own, which may surprise him, in despite

of faith. But I, more lucky than my shepherd, or perhaps less lucky, for again the matter is one of the perspective of the mind, can say that at a theatre last night, here in this wind-swept mud-brown village, capital that was of all the Spains, when the piece was over not only did I say regretfully "It is finished," but I wanted it straight to begin again. And yet perhaps it would not have appealed to every one, because it had no moral precept to inculcate in the last act, after in the first three, the actors like unlicensed bridegrooms all had run their course. Religion seems to have left as an inheritance to its half-sister chill morality, that in the last act of our lives all should be strictly done within the limits of its law. And thus it seems that we have merely, as is usual, changed one collar for another, but have remained essentially the selfsame dogs. But in the theatre of which I write, laws were made merely to be broken, and serve as counsels of perfection, and quietly and bitterly, just as in life itself, the story was unrolled.

In the bare theatre, devoid of accessories, and decorated but by the ingenious installation of electric light, decked out in toilets which apparently were made on purpose for trans-

Pyrenean use, and with their coal-black hair set thick with specious-looking diamonds, sat hard-eyed ladies, with their full busts bulging beyond the fronts of boxes. All were full armed with fans, as if each one had come to judge the world. But if the ladies in the boxes with their attendant men appeared as if they were but part and portion of a play in which they took the part of ladies and of gentlemen, the sovereign people in the gallery took the reproach away.

Well are they called in Spain the brazen folk (*gente del bronce*) and "los Morenos," for all were dark and many of them, through want of washing and with the glare of sun and burning of the fierce Castilian wind, shone bright as brass itself. Short and square-built, with eyes that twinkled merrily, something between the twinkling of the eyes of jockeys and of monkeys, their faces shaved but once a week and for the most part set in a stubble of black wire, their flat white hats from Cordoba or blue Basque caps formed as it were an aureole of rascalism.

Naturally, knowing nothing on any subject under heaven, they were critical of all. Actors and actresses, the piece, the theatre, the ladies

in the stalls, the Government, all had their turn, and upon each and all they gave their absurd opinions, formed with much native quickness but without intelligence, just as a woman glancing at a horse sees at the first sight that it is a jade, but has no power to give her reasons words, or as a monkey looking at a nut sees at the first glance that it is rotten at the heart.

In rows they sat as thick as gulls upon a rock, their cloaks thrown back, their thin brown fingers coloured orange at the tips from the eternal cigarette, the only fire of Vesta never extinguished in the Spains. Their women in the mass were handsome, strong and even harder-eyed than were their sisters in the stalls. Their hair piled up in masses, or parted in the middle, half concealed their eyes, and the white powder daubed upon their cheeks dusted their brows, encroaching on their heads, so that the face and hair melted together in a coat of white. At first sight one divined the realistic view, both of the stalls and gallery, and it was faithfully set forth upon the stage.

The hard white light, brown land and wind-swept hills, the meandering rivers dry in the summer and in the winter torrents, the mixture

of the Arab with the Goth, the Roman, and the Carthaginian cross, with garnishing of gipsy and of Jew, have all contributed to the material point of view.

The authors of the play, descendants by the right divine of genius from the great unknown writer who evolved the curious masterpiece of choice Castilian known as "La Celestina," had set forth as in a spectroscope the very pith and marrow of the life of Spain. Homelike, and biblical, and seasoned with the salt of Betica, it formed a southern complement to the plays of Ibsen, in its simplicity and truth. In a huge sparsely furnished house, somewhere near Seville, lived an hidalgo, who must have been descended from the Ingenious Gentleman, he of the running greyhound, the bold ferret, and the horse who had more corners than had a real from the mint of Potosí. Tall, grey, and upright, all his delight was in his horse and land, and all the world to him was full of people eager to do good, if they but got the chance. Withal no fool in things that appertain to daily life. In speech and dress precise; sober in diet and for morality a bar of steel. His wife having died whilst on a journey, for some strange notion of saving

pain to his two daughters, he had concealed her death.

With various excuses and a wealth of lying letters only to be excused to conscience by the idea of doing good, he kept the fraud alive. At last his eldest daughter married, and the younger went on a visit to her, leaving their father, lonely, with his servants and his horse. Still he wrote on, and always held out hopes of his dead wife's return. Into the Andalusian Eden glided all unawares the female snake, creeping about the heart of the hidalgo after the fashion of its prototype of old.

She was a country girl, and her entry with her father, a stupid and yet humorous Andalusian clown, appeared quite natural, as she came to take a servant's place, left vacant by a death.

The solitary gentleman had a mania that all his servants in the evening should come into the drawing-room and learn to read and write. This led to intimacy, and by degrees to love. But still the simple gentleman would not confess it even to himself. Then came upon the scene a rough Asturian miller, one Polanco, whom in his loneliness the modern Quixote had invited to his house. He and his dog Veneno soon overran the place, the latter

sleeping on the hidalgo's bed, the former talking and laughing with the maids. One day he pinched the Zagala (the new maid), and then her master found out what had been passing in his heart. He instantly boxed Polanco's ears, and turned him and his dog Veneno out of doors.

He went, protesting that his expulsion left a bad savour in his mouth. Next came the hesitations of a man of feeling and of sense, described with humour and with pathos, and at last a secret marriage, and a brief interval of transient happiness. Then one by one his servants leave him, some from jealousy of their old comrade, and others, as the old nurse who brought his children up, out of respect for the remembrance of his wife. As the old nurse went out, carrying her bundle, Spanish fashion, in a towel, the soul of the Zagala for the first time wakened into life. Till then she had accepted, in the Eastern way, life, love, and everything as fate. But then she suddenly became alive, and screamed impressively, "Go call her back." Then doubts assailed her, and she thought that she had been a traitor; but her old father came to visit her, and her pride in her smart clothes and jewellery stilled, for



the moment, all her qualms. Her father is astonished, smells her pocket-handkerchief, touches her flounces timidly, and is delighted when she tells him "she is all lace inside." Then in the whimsical, half-stupid manner of his kind, says, "I feel half ashamed to be your father," which she takes as he had meant it, for a compliment.

But in the village where the drama passes, news of the marriage soon had filtered out. None would believe it, and Polanco, with his dog, determines to deliver up himself a victim on the altar of his friendship, and to learn the truth. He comes, is well received, and when he learns the truth is thunderstruck. In vain the poor hidalgo tries to make Polanco understand that he has tried to act, if foolishly, still like a Christian and a gentleman. By the inexorable logic of a commercial world, Polanco shows him that he has brought ruin upon himself and misery upon the daughters whom he loves, and probably upon the girl whom he has taken to his heart.

Indignantly he asks Polanco, "Would you not have acted in the same manner as I did?" and gets the answer, "I—I should have acted in a very different way."

Just as they are about to quarrel, comes a letter from his daughter saying she and her husband have returned from Italy, and will be with him in an hour. It seems they think the mother is at home. Then for the first time all the significance of his action rises before his eyes. How can he meet his daughters, and present them instead of the long longed-for mother, a young servant girl. The Zagala overhears him, and is mad with terror, and threatens then and there to run away. The daughters come, and then taking the elder one aside, he tells her of his pious fraud and after tears obtains her pardon ; but he knows that there can be no pardon for the next action that he must confess. Days pass, and by degrees the daughters slowly begin to feel all is not right. Then they ask for the nurse who brought them up, and hear she is at home living alone in a small cottage in a village near at hand. The eldest goes and sees her, learns the truth, and comes back heart-broken. Still though, she doubts, until by accident she sees her father kiss his wife. At last her love prevails, and she forgives her father, and agrees to take the younger sister off and keep the truth from her. They go, and the poor father is left desolate.

He naturally turns to his wife for comfort, misses her ; grows uneasy ; searches the house, the terrace ; rushes out to the garden calling upon her name. You hear him in the orange grove, and from the eyes of all the "brazen people" in the gallery real tears drop. They make their way through paint upon the faces of ladies in the boxes and the stalls. The theatre suffers and weeps, as if each man and woman lived the agony upon the stage. Lastly the poor hidalgo rushes back again, and in a moment, takes it in, and stands turned to a pillar of salt grief. Then cloaks are flung across the mouth, women tie highly coloured shawls under their chins, ladies throw furs about their powdered shoulders, and the audience, holding their handkerchiefs before their mouths, for it is good to take precautions in the subtile air, stream out into the night.

## LE CHEF

JUST at the corner of the streets called Twenty-fifth of May and Calle de Cangallo stood Claraz's hotel. In those days, long before the city of La Plata rose and fell, before La Union Civica was known, and whilst the echoes of the Paraguayan war were still resounding in the River Plate, it was a busy spot. The life of Buenos Ayres ran before the door. Only three squares away the two great Plazas, with their palaces and barracks, basked in the sun, or shivered in the wind, according as the Pampéro whistled, or the hot north wind blew. The Stock Exchange was near; the mole within a stone's throw, and up the deep-cut Calle de Cangallo, which looked more like a dry canal than a great thoroughfare, stood several of the principal hotels. The house was built all round a courtyard, with a great archway over which were rooms upon an upper floor where Claraz kept his saddlery, his books, and natural history collec-

tions, and in which he generally lived, to be away from noise. The rest of the establishment was but one story high, though being built upon a bank, it looked right out across the River Plate, in Buenos Ayres nearly thirty miles in breadth, so that the houses in La Colonia, on the other side, are only visible upon the clearest days. Claraz himself, a tall and black-haired Swiss, of all the men I ever saw, was the least fitted for the business of keeping an hotel. Well educated and with scientific tastes, his guests were almost all either commercial travellers or sheep and cattle farmers, who strode into the place, with a Basque porter carrying their saddles, took off their pistols, hung them on their beds, and called for drink incontinently, stamping about the brick courtyard in their long riding-boots and spurs. As all the rooms looked out into the yard, the fashion was to leave the doors wide open and to converse whilst lying on your bed, with any one you knew. In some respects the place was like a school, with the initial difference that you were pretty sure to learn some things worth knowing, after a day or two. Claraz himself, being a naturalist, knew all the animals and a percentage of the

myriad shrubs and trees of the republic, and others in their several degrees were able to impart much knowledge of a varied kind and differing quality.

Kincaid from Patagonia had much Indian lore, and knew the chiefs of all the southern tribes. Though he lived out upon the fringe of Indian territory, and far removed from towns, his neighbours gauchos, and his life to herd his sheep and cattle all the day and sit down either alone or with his herdsmen in a hut at night to smoke and read a "Glasgow Herald" ten weeks old, which told him in eight columns all the ecclesiastic news of the Free Church and the Establishment, he yet remained a Scotchman, so Scotch that had you met him in a railway-carriage you would have thought him a new-comer fresh from Kirkcaldy or from Perth. Benitez Wilson, half Argentine, half Englishman, kept a *pulperia* in the south camp, and having been to England to be educated, had returned home again, more Argentine than ever, after the fashion of the Texan youth sent by his father to tour round Europe, who being asked on his return what mode of life he proposed to embrace, replied, "Guess, Poppa, that I'll have a

horse-ranch out in Nueces County or down by Goliad." Thin, slight, and dark, with long brown hands, and feet eternally imprisoned in tight patent-leather boots, he did not look the man to keep a frontier drinking-shop; but was reported, when a fight arose, to be a master of the art of throwing empty bottles, which he delivered like a Benjamite, and seldom missed his mark. What was worth knowing about racing on the flat (three squares or fifty) bare-backed and owners up, he knew, and no one from the Tres Arroyos to Tandil was cunninger in the innumerable false starts which are the science of a gaucho race. His life had made him taciturn, but when he chose, he could discourse of many things with the strange double view of the mixed-blooded man, which makes him never quite at home with either race, and an eternal stranger in the land. The other guests were mostly bagmen, usually Frenchmen from Marseilles or Bordeaux, black-bearded, voluble and unilingual, for why should any one whom God has blessed by making him a Frenchman struggle with other tongues? "You do not speak the language of the place," Benitez Wilson had remarked to Monsieur Lagadigadon. "Certainly

not," he answered. "*Je parle Français, et ça me suffit, voyez-vous.*" But notwithstanding their linguistic limitations, they were a jovial set, carrying destruction, as it seemed, amongst the female sex of every land, and passing hours relating all their conquests, although the listeners might well have been aware, by personal experience, that all the tales were false. They and a knot of Englishmen, mostly offshoots of county families, and known in Buenos Ayres as the "Gentle Shepherds," made the most noise of all the visitors, and passed their time in general in the billiard-room, playing the cannon game, with lumps of chalk held in the bridge hand, with balls like turnips, and with cues like table legs.

The fashionable streets in which were situated the best shops cut the Cangallo at right angles, and even in those days had tramways running down them preceded by a boy on horseback who blew upon a horn, so that the curious little inn, even then, was an anachronism, though Buenos Ayres still in some respects was primitive. Horses were commoner than dogs; they stood at every house, with their feet hobbled during the time their owners talked or drank, and now and then, when they got bored, they



would hop off, raising their shackled feet like rocking-horses, and congregatè in knots, where with their reins tied to the saddles drawing their heads into their chests, they stood and fabulated. Before the Stock Exchange dozens, or sometimes hundreds, stood, and stockbrokers felt their way cautiously amongst them with propitiatory words, hissing and chirruping, and sometimes coming to a standstill, so to speak, storm stayed, amongst a sea of tails and hoofs, too difficult to pass. The presidential escort, dressed as exaggerated lancers, used to ride down the streets behind the carriage of the president, just as a troop of Indians rides behind a chief, all with their toes scarce touching their small native stirrups, their bodies swaying easily above the hips, talking and laughing, and some smoking cigarettes. The upper classes dressed in black broadcloth, and all wore black felt hats which made them look like Maltese ship-chandlers or touts in the Levánt. They held themselves the first of humankind, calling the English "gringos," the Italians "carca-maños," Spaniards "gallegos," a term which they resented, as in Spain the word *gallego* is used to designate a man of all work, and the Brazilians, monkeys (macacos), whilst referring

to themselves as the *Porteños* (men of the port), though at that time there was no harbour in the place. Women, except the higher classes who had travelled and seen that Mecca of the *rastaquouère*, "Paris de Francia," dressed in a loose black skirt with petticoats much starched and laced, wore low-cut shoes and white silk stockings, and minced upon the stones. Over their heads they wore the *manta*, a thick black cashmere shawl which, crossing on the chest, covered deficiencies and served them for protection and disguise. They seldom ventured far from home, except to mass, or to walk three or four together in a row about the squares, when in the evening military bands discoursed the strains of Offenbach or clashed out patriotic music written in general by Italian music-masters.

The house of Juan Garáy, one of the *conquistadores*, still stood, a long low brick or mud adobé edifice, close to the corner of the square, and usually the architecture was half-Moorish, flat-roofed and flanked by towers called *miradores*, all dazzlingly white. A few tall French-built buildings studded the town, breaking the line of long flat roofs, and looking

vulgar and unsuitable both to the people and the place. One of these just at the corner of the largest square was let in furnished suites and called "La Casa Amueblada," and occupied in general either by French or by Hungarian women, who sat in dressing-gowns, with their hair most elaborately dressed, at all the balconies. Painted but unashamed they sat at the receipt of custom, which seldom seemed to lack, although their tariff was in general a gold ounce, a coin which in those days was plentiful. In almost every side street, red lamps and doors ajar held by a chain, denoted where a lower class of ladies lived, and not content with this, the bars and cigarette shops all held their houris, and that although the women of the place were keen competitors. So much so, that in a town in Entre Rios a Frenchman having called upon the ruler of the place with a request to start a tolerated house, was answered with an oath: "Yes, start it and be damned, but you are certain to be ruined, for here the women all are amateurs." General society scarcely existed in the modern sense, but followed antique Spanish or semi-Moorish rules, the men at parties congregating into knots, smoking and talking scandal, and the

girls seated upon chairs against the wall, whispering in undertones whilst managing their fans. Sometimes a man approached them, and selecting one, led her with compliments point-blank about her "beauteous eyes," her "grace" or what not, to the dance, which was a slow and swinging Spanish waltz danced with much balancing of hips, the arms held out like pump-handles, and during which the woman's head rested upon her partner's shoulder with her eyes closed, as she had been asleep, and smiling rapturously. The ceremony over, she was led slowly to the refreshment-room and ate an ice or drank some lemonade, standing the while a fire of compliments, which as she knew them all by heart and they were fixed as is a liturgy, must have been wearisome, although their age did not seem able to impair their efficacy and personal effect. In the less fashionable circles, they danced the *pericón* and *el cielito*, quaint, old-world dances with much waving of their handkerchiefs, and breaking now and then into some verses which the unlucky man was held to improvise, though generally he broke down utterly and the song ended in a laugh. The older people sat and drank maté, smoking cigarettes of black tobacco made in Brazil,

which they lit frequently from a hot coal kept on a chafing-dish, or from a slow match hanging to a chain. On one side all was new, that is in what concerned commercial life, and steamboats and hotels were certainly more comfortable than those of England in the days of which I write. Upon the social side, with the exception of some rich men who had been educated either in Paris or in Bordeaux, or who had travelled, customs survived from Spain, and not from modern Spain, but from the Spain of the pre-revolutionary age. As there was little mixed society, except that of the nymphs of every land that Europe sent as civiliziers, we as a general rule remained at Claraz's at night, and either talked or played at billiards, drinking the while maté or caña punch, or a decoction which we called "*la boisson Cavantous*," compounded of such simples as white curaçao, gum, gin and bitters, and a little lemon-juice.

Most of the company is dead, the last-named liquid, helped by whisky, having proved too much for them, in spite of struggles almost heroic in their foolishness. Some have been killed by Indians, drowned at sea, knocked on the head in rows, or died in drinking-shops. Long John Arbuthnott, known to us all as

“Jar,” from the initials of his name, and by the reason of a flowing beard which, mingling with his hair, caused him to look like Jove, sailed in a schooner to the Falkland Islands, and the last seen of him was his tall figure wrapped in a pampa poncho, waving good-bye as she cleared in a gale of wind from Maldonado and dropped into the mist.

Lucien Simmonet, a young Parisian journalist, who gained his living in a mysterious way by writing paragraphs from Paris in a back street in Buenos Ayres, became head secretary to His Majesty Aureille the First, King of Arauco, and his last letter to me, dated from Union Bay in Patagonia, just as his chief and he were starting for their Mecca in the West, has formed his epitaph, for from the wilds of Araucaria, if he returned, that is to me unknown. Dunsmere was lost in those vague regions known as “down about the Straits”; all that remains of him is a blue poncho barred with red, which lay for years upon his father’s sofa in his smoking-room, and a whip made of coronilla wood mounted with silver, which when I used to take it up from where it lay, would bring him back to me, and make the tears stand in his father’s eyes, who knew

intuitively where and with whom my thoughts were straying, whilst I held it in my hand. Others have turned respectable. Simon Uruchi has an *estancia* in the district of Tuyù, is wealthy, a senator I think, and now and then his name appears in "La Tribuna" as having spoken on free-trade, protection, or the inherent right of every man to cheat, or something of the kind. All the Italians have gone home, having made "leetel money," and settled down to smoke Virginia cigars, grow their own wine, and talk of the old days amongst the "Barbari." My partner is a country squire in Devonshire who hunts and sits upon the bench, is a staunch Protestant and true, keeping his sitting in the chancel manfully and standing up for Church and King, though he believes in neither of them, as far as I can see. John Bland, the "Rengo," has an Indian wife, ten children, and a rancho near Cala in Entre Rios, wears native clothes (the poncho and the chiripá), has almost lost his English, and, a friend tells me, is happy as a dragon-fly, watching his flocks increase and his own life slip peacefully away. One hung on till last year, and then departed, not the least inclined to go, for life was pleasant to him, his groove just fitted, and in his way he had

achieved renown. At Claraz's we called him Treadway, though his name was Cossart; but certain difficulties he had when in the little frontier town called El Bragado, where, as he said, "I used to sing *basso cantante* in the church choir, and serve the Mass, *vous voyez ça d'ici, mon cher,*" induced him for a time to change his name, although he still remained a stoutish Frenchman, broad-shouldered, and with a profile just below the waist beginning even then to show, though he fought with it manfully and possibly with stays. His dead white face set in a jet-black beard, looked like a pearl in black enamel, and his large beaky nose—" *J'ai un grand diable de nez comme tous les gens intelligents,*" he used to say—gave a fierce look which his intensely black and simple eyes quite truthfully belied. He was perhaps a little truculent, and stood a good deal on his dignity at open doors and crossings, and when he walked the streets and had the wall at his right hand, for nothing in the world would he have given up his right. No, not if his chief hero, Napoleon III, whom he admired but yet called Badinguet, had risen from the dead.

Few people even in Buenos Ayres at that day, when life was cheap and every man went



armed, cared to contest the matter with him, for he was strong as a West Highland bull, or, as he said, *un lapin*, and moreover his troubles in Bragado had given him a name which it was his chief care to keep alive. Though born in London he was French to the backbone, his family having come from Carpentras; but yet spoke English perfectly, with just a little foreign accent grafted on cockney, which did not in his mouth sound vulgar, but as it were a complement to his appearance, which certainly was French. Thus no one but a Frenchman of his type could, when a woman passed, look at her with a conquering air and say, "Not bad, that little girl, eh? Strange how she smiled at me—but then they all do; one gets no peace because of them—*ah, sacrées femmes!*" He could not have believed himself, but for their self-respect, men of his type and nationality were forced in those days to assume that attitude, as Englishmen of the same time and kind thought it incumbent on them when a horse passed by them on the road, to put their heads a little on one side and mutter critically, "He seems to me to go a trifle short on the off fore, or perhaps on the near hind." Just at that moment he was working as a diver, which his

proportions did not seem to fit him for, but which, as he said, "after my trouble in the camp, a simple matter of an almost necessary homicide, is prudent, and the most fitting occupation for a man who wants to pass unseen." A statement which in itself was logical enough, had he but gone about the streets, lived, slept, and had his being in his diver's dress. But as, his duties over, he dressed himself in the black suit with low-necked shirt and black felt floppy hat, which was the uniform of every one, the reason was not plain. But, be that as it may, he dined at Claraz's, sleeping in what he called "*mon taudis*" in a by-street, and was ready at all times to talk and tell his strange adventures in the provinces, or to play billiards, at which game he easily gave fifty in a hundred to almost any one in town. This talent, joined with great generosity and natural kindness, a somewhat "pawky" humour, and the most perfect feelings of a natural gentleman, made him a favourite with all. Though not weighed down with money, he always had the "Vie Parisienne" sent to him from France, esteeming that thereby he kept himself in touch with what he called "Le Bitume" and "La Haute Bicherie," not that he had nostalgia of the city

of the light, thinking that the life in Buenos Ayres was the pleasantest the world afforded, as many of us thought; but from a sense of duty, as it were, just as the Englishman pored on the "Licensed Victuallers' Gazette," reading accounts of prize-fights in the halcyon days of Sayers and the Benicia Boy, and other worthies, long departed to that limbo which presumably they share with jockeys, touts, and sporting noblemen. The "Gentle Shepherds" used to borrow the French papers, and pore on them, especially when they found anything indecent, and then among themselves aver with oaths the French were "an immoral crowd," returning to the pure columns of "Bell's Life" with Saxon innocence. Such differences of ideals, no doubt, are in the very life-blood of a race; and points of honour, which the "Gentle Shepherds" held in high esteem, were to the Frenchman quite incomprehensible, and each looked on the other with contempt tempered by whisky or by absinthe, according to their kind. Both of them looked down on the Argentines, calling them "niggers" or *des barbares*, whilst they returned in kind, heaping the English up together with the Germans under the name of *gringos*, calling the French

*gabachos*, and looking with contempt on both of them, as men who could not ride. Still they jogged on together, misunderstanding one another mutually, as they were joined in holy matrimony.

I left the country thinking never to return, being seen off by many of the society at the quaint little inn, into the whaleboat which in those days took one out to the steamers which lay eight, ten, or twelve miles off, often hull down, in the thick yellow water of the River Plate. After two years, lacking advancement and with the nostalgia of the open plains, the horses and the wild free life, I sailed again, landed in Buenos Ayres, and found the place had altered in that time almost as much as European cities alter in an age. No longer whaleboats took one from the ship, nor did a cart drawn by three horses with a Basque riding the near-side animal, or a bullock-wagon with a man seated on the yoke, carry one to the shore where the water shoaling made it unsafe for boats. Steam-launches pitching on the choppy waves like buckjumpers, in half an hour or so, performed the passage which in the whaleboats often took more than two, and on arriving near the beach,

I found a smart tin pier replaced the wooden wharf which had survived apparently from when the conquerors first landed at the city of Good Airs. But once inside the town, although fell progress had already laid its hands on many of the older buildings, sweeping away the house of the old conqueror Garáy as if, according to a friend of mine, it had been nothing but a disagreeable mother-in-law, the old life held its sway.

Still at the corners of the streets the hobbled horses stood. Hard hats, except amongst officials, and the like, had made scant progress. Few people carried walking-sticks, but in their hands held plaited raw-hide whips, with silver tops, flat lashes, and a thong to hang them to the wrist. Still women went to church all dressed in black. Basque milk-boys rode their ponies, seated between their cans, dressed half like sailors, half like gauchos, wearing the chiripá and the broad belt fastened with silver coins, with a black jacket and thick boots, a sort of cross between the kind a pilot and a cattle-rider wear. Beggars no longer rode, but with increase of wealth and of modernity, had multiplied a little, as if to prove that no one has devised a scheme to make the rich man

rich, and not involve as its corollary the increasing poverty of our poor brethren in the Lord. Arrived at Claraz's a *changador* carrying my things up from the custom-house, all was unchanged. The owner still sat quietly in his upper room and classified his plants, whilst guests arrived and either at their own sweet will selected rooms, or were inducted into them by an old housekeeper from Biscay who spoke but little Spanish, and that all topsyturvy, who could not read or write or far less cipher, standing for all that manfully between her master and his guests, and bustling about. The bagmen still disputed as of yore about their conquests, the "Gentle Shepherds" drank and idled through the day, cursing the country, but still loath to leave it, knowing that in a British colony they must work or starve, contingencies they did not care to contemplate, all being gentlemen. In such a place it did not take more than ten minutes to shake down and learn the local news, hear of the revolution up in Entre Rios, the Indian *malón* upon the frontiers, the death of So-and-so, the feats of some one's horse, and to absorb a cocktail, which done, the world appeared to fall again into its last year's rut. "And Cossart? Oh,

yes, he has left off his diving," Claraz said, "and keeps a restaurant, makes a good living, and has a mistress called Emilienne." Dinner-time brought him to the inn, and it transpired that, being bred a cook, at the first chance he had returned to his profession, and now appeared rather bejewelled, but yet quite the gentleman, to play his game at billiards and incidentally welcome me effusively, and tell me of his altered circumstances and of Emilienne, whom he described with so much detail that I appeared to know her perfectly, both dressed and undressed, her ways, thoughts, habits, with *une tache vermeille* which she had upon her shoulder, her business aptitude, and other details which recited openly put the most hard drinking of the "Gentle Shepherds" to the blush, as their conventions and those of the possessor of *cette bonne brave fille* differed as much as do the stars, both in their glory and their magnitude. The restaurant turned out to be a stuffy, much befied and dusty little place in which one dined extremely well and cheaply, and heard ten languages spoken all at once and loudly, and where *le chef*, wearing the habit of his craft, went round to every table and talked familiarly to all his

guests, hoping their food was to their liking, and Emilienne, dressed in grey beige, her hair *en bandeaux*, presided at a desk, so quiet and businesslike that it appeared she just had left a convent to come and take the post. The guests departed; the *chef*, leading me to the desk, presented me to the fair priestess of *céans*, who bowed *très dignement*, accepted *mes hommages*, and comported herself generally in such a way as to quite justify the choice my friend had made. To the outward eye, the lady seemed one of those sensible commercial French women, who in a situation which an English girl would fill after the fashion of Moll Flagon, or half ashamed, knew how to conquer virtue by her seemly conduct, although she had it not, that is if after all mere virtue can be put beside good humour and real kindness of heart.

Our talk ran on my friend's advancement, his future prospects, on politics, religion, the next president, the drought, the locusts, Indians, and other subjects which a year spent in Europe slackens the grasp of, and in all of them Emilienne gave her opinions when asked for them, in such wise manner and so foolishly, that at last the *chef* said to



her with the kindly air with which a man speaks to a child, "*Ma belle*, go and see what the *marmitons* are at," and she, patting her bandeaux and smoothing out her skirt, tripped dutifully away. We sat and smoked Brazilian cigarettes, drank lemonade, and watched the fireflies flitting in the trees in the back garden, what time the chef unfolded all his plans. "You see," he said, "that diving business led to nothing"; then, for more emphasis, repeated it in French, "*menait à rien, pas même ça*," and as he spoke he bit his thumb-nail and waved his hand before his face in token of disgust. "*J'avais mes quarante ans*, yes, forty years, so I said, Cossart, *mon ami*, after all, you are a cook, a cook professed, and it is in *les marmites* that your future will be found. I thought of marrying, but then at forty years without a sou, not twenty paper dollars in the bank—a dot—you laugh, at forty years with my black beard becoming grey. I thought of shaving it, but . . . bah! So I went to a lady that I knew, what they call *Trotaconventillos*, eh, and asked her to get me somebody, not too pretty, not too young, neither too thin nor fat, a good arithmetician and *rangée*, and she, the Lord knows where, procured Emilienne . . .

*il faut une femme, mon cher*, that poses you, especially in *ce sale métier* that I follow now." Laughing internally I told him that his lines had fallen not quite in a hard place, and he, loosening the buttons of his waistcoat, rejoined, "Yes, I have ambition, *quand on est chef* it always is like that. My hand, you see, what with the diving and the years I spent out at Bragado minding sheep, had got a little rusty, so I said, *Mon gars*, you take this little restaurant, get to your tools, and then when you have saved a bit, go home and settle down, after a month or two of course in La Ville Lumière; for before I die what I ambition is to be the *chef* at a swell London club, so that at last I shall be known for what I am, and make a name, eh——" Every ambition being equal, and but measurable by the effort it entails, I cordially agreed, bade him farewell, and in the morning took the steamboat up the Paraná, landed at Diamante, found my tropilla waiting, and galloped to my house.

Two years brought me again to Buenos Ayres on my return to Europe, where I found my friend, still prosperous, his little café changed for a larger one, Emilienne gone, "*partie la matinée, avec un riche Brésilien,*"

and duly was seen off on board my ship by Cossart, from whom I parted not thinking I should meet him, for his ambition to be *chef* in a good London club seemed to be quite forgotten in his prosperity. Two or three, or perhaps five years had passed, when, lunching at a club in Edinburgh, and having got a mutton-chop, half raw, half burned, I sent (the first and last time in my life) to see the manager. The waiter said that Monsieur Trastour was away, but Monsieur something or another would come and speak to me. He came, and looking up I beheld Cossart, unchanged except that he had shaved his beard, and looked a little like an actor, with his blue stubbly chin. Speaking in Spanish, I asked him to meet me at a café in an hour or two, finished my lunch, and then sat down to smoke and ponder on the strange meeting after so many years. The *chef* appeared true to the tryst, embraced me, patting my shoulder with his great hairy hands, and hugging me. "You see," he said, "this is an *étape* on the way to London, but *ogni strada men' a Roma*—no, no whisky, it is an article of faith I know here in this North—but I will tell you how I came here—yes, a cigar," and he chose a long black

oily one, not lighting it, but keeping it stuck in the corner of his mouth. "You see, *mon cher*, I think it was the sedentary life that got upon my nerves. Then, too, that matter of Emilienne—*les femmes, mon ami, ça vous abîme un homme.*" He paused, and looking at him I perceived that he was growing stouter, and no doubt in general *les femmes* did not appeal so much to him as in the days gone by, although a little later in the street he criticized them freely, as an old troop-horse out at grass is said in story-books to prick his ears at the sound of military music, even when yeomanry pass by. "Travel," he then continued, "is the best cure for all affections of the heart—you smile—well, well, that poor Emilienne was not perhaps so fatal to my peace, but vanity, and we all have it—*n'en doutez pas.* You see, I did not like the chaff about that damned Brazilian and his dollars, although, no doubt, had I been in his place, I should have done the same. Better by far to run about the world, even with such an ignoble *macaque*, than keep the books of a mere *guinguette* such as mine was, eh? Philosophy is in our Gallic blood, not of course the dull Germanic trash about first causes—woman is man's first cause

—but, well—one resigns oneself to the inevitable—so I attached myself as cook and secretary to a diplomatist. Half the whole world I travelled with him for two years, going from Buenos Ayres up to Corumbá—you know, in Matto Grosso. Ah, yes, I recollect, you told me when you first went there after the Paraguayan war, the alcalde came down to the steamer riding on an ox. Well, not much changed, that Corumbá, when I was there. Nothing to cook, of course, but *charqui dulce* and some *mandioca*, and as there was no business, nothing to write. The people still washing out gold-dust, you recollect?" I nodded, and he seemed to remember his cigar was still unlighted and struck a match upon his thigh, though there were matchboxes upon the table, remarking as he did so, "*usage de la guerre.*"

"*Mon cher*, a desolating country, hot as the nether hell and damp—his excellency's boots were mildewed every day, and I, though cook and secretary, cleaned them, out of *désœuvrement*, for they were London boots, and seemed a link with home. Mosquitoes like a thick cloud after rain, and every cursed crawling thing you ever saw, the people, negroes almost

to a man, and yet, I liked the place—so did his excellency—it grew upon us both. Nothing on earth to do after the call *de rigueur* on the governor. We lounged about all day in our pyjamas, swung in our hammocks, listening to our lives. I cooked the breakfast, having a negro girl for *marmiton*, dished it myself, and waited on his excellency, who talked to me quite freely, for *entre nous* we were the only Christians in the place. Then he sat down to smoke, and I stood by and talked to him, telling him of all kinds of things and others, to pass the time away. Then came the siesta, and we got upon our horses and rode them down to bathe, going into the river on their backs for fear of the electric eels, the rayas, and some little devils of the deep they call a *pejeréy*. Then out into the forest, a veritable decoration of the opera, with climbing plants like ropes on every tree, monkeys and parrots and butterflies a foot across the wings. Then back to dinner and a stroll about the town, right through the grass-grown plaza, with the adobé palm-thatched houses whitewashed and gleaming in the night—*bon Dieu*, I grow poetical. But still I liked the place, and sometimes, walking down the street I hear the

niggers scratching their guitars or playing the marimba, and wish that I were back again. It's stupid, isn't it? But it's stronger than myself—*mais on est philosophe*. With my diplomatist I went from Buenos Ayres to Madrid, where I got tired of him, gave him his *congé*, so to speak, and left him in the hands of the worst cook I ever met, a Greek, without an atom either of culinary knowledge or of dignity. I found myself in London, and in a month or two this billet has turned up, but I shall not stay long in this cold place amongst these people, whose chief pleasure is to talk about the quarrels of their Kirks. Not that I look down on religion; it is a useful scourge enough, and keeps them honest for the fear of hell, and comforts women and all those who never read Voltaire or Rousseau, but for the rest, God's not a bad man, as we would say, out in the River Plate."

So saying the philosopher lit his cigar again, shook hands with me, and went to look after *les marmitons*, who, as he said, were ever on the watch to spoil his plans and break his heart by letting saucepans overboil, entrées grow cold and tough, and bringing down discredit on his head. I watched him swagger

down the street, looking at all the girls he passed, shouldering the men, and humming softly "Popol," a song in vogue in those days, with its absurd refrain of "*je me nomme Popol,*" and setting forth the adventures of its hero when "*au fond de l'Amérique, pays du Panama, il faisait de la botanique quand p'tite Française passa.*"

Six or eight months had passed when, passing that fine specimen of modern architecture, St. Peter's, Eaton Square, on horseback, riding to the Park, a voice called after me in somewhat Gallic Spanish, and turning in the saddle I saw my friend emerging from the church. A wondrous change had come upon him, for he was "*cinglé,*" as he would have called it, in a frock-coat, with a gardenia in his buttonhole. His hat shone shiny as a life-guard's helmet, and was cocked at such an angle on his head, it seemed capillary attraction only could keep it in its place. His boots were like the top layer of a pot of jelly, and in his hand he had a silver-mounted cane, the crutch of which was ivory, shaped like a woman's leg. In his left hand he held new gloves of a bright *sang de bœuf*, and on his cheek the barber's powder clung, like sugar on



a cake. As a smart wedding was in process I was prepared for anything, to hear he was a millionaire, was married, or had made money on the Stock Exchange. "I come," he said, "from witnessing a marriage ceremony. One of my employers or my clients, all is one, has lost his liberty to-day." As I was still profane to what he meant, he said, "I have at last achieved the summit of my hopes, and there is no one rather than yourself whom I would make the sharer of my joy." Then straddling out his legs, he critically scanned my horse and tried to run his hand down its foreleg, almost receiving a slight kick whilst doing so. "Not a bad horse, *mon cher*, a little sickle-hocked I think—what, eh, from South America?—then not a word, we have been there ourselves." As I gazed speechless at him, knowing he knew as little about horses as I knew of his mystery, he drew out a cigar from an enormous silver-mounted case, lit it, and puffing out the smoke, scanning the while the ladies as they left the church, finding no doubt some of them "sickle-hocked" enough, he said, "At last I am the *chef* of a swell London club, and feel I am the right man for the place, for I have now the time to think my

menus out ; my *marmitons* are good, and," tapping on his head, "something here tells me that I shall succeed and make a name at last." Sending my horse home, I got into a cab and took him to a restaurant, to hear about his luck. As we walked through the grill-room, at the end of which the cooks, dressed all in white, presided at the fire, he whispered *pas de personalités*. We sat down at a table, and I think I ate a mutton-chop, red and enormous, and flanked by mushrooms and tomatoes, the moral cookery which England loves, and out of which have grown the brains and sinews of the Imperial race, so dear to editors. He watched me, as one might watch a cannibal with horror and amazement, and being without appetite, as often happens, I can well believe, to those of his profession, drank lager beer and crumbled up some bread.

He spoke about his plans and his ambitions, and how one day he should retire, and though he should keep on "my little digging" here in town, should buy some land at Carpentras to plant his cabbages as Diocletian did, because he said the air is good there, and that they grew a little wine, delicious, and as he spoke he blew a kiss at it, puffing his cheeks out like

a cannon-ball. What more he might have said the Lord God knows, and himself only, for a portrait-painter came into the place, and, sitting down, began to talk to us. I introduced him as an artist, and the *chef*, bowing, said, "I am an artist, too," then lowering his voice, he added, "*culinaire.*"

## A WIRE-WALKER

### I

THE talk had run on women in the club smoking-room of a small foreign port. In it were gathered all the heterogeneous waifs and strays, which, floating on the gulf stream of their lives, had for the moment swirled into the quiet eddy of the sleepy little town. Spaniards and Greeks and Englishmen all said their word; the solitary Frenchman who, by virtue of his race, was held a doctor in the matter, had set forth his crude philosophy born on the boulevard, culled from the simples of the "café concert," and duly sublimated in the crucible of prejudice with which men judge those without whom they cannot pass their lives, and which they who are judged repay with interest.

A Consul, thin, lean, and capriform in face, had given his opinion that wedlock was the thing—that is, of course, after a man has reached the time of life when—that is, in fact

—as you may say he has become—and here he blew a cloud of smoke through his wide nostrils, looking at the ceiling, on which a crowd of chubby Cupids (or angels) sprawled, their bellies downwards—he has become fit for monogamy by force. His hearers languidly assented to so obvious a truth, and he took up his tale.

“You see,” he said, “the family, and property, and personal dignity, and the desire of all men to live cleanly,” and here a voice broke in, “When he cannot do otherwise,” at which he gravely nodded, recognizing, as it were, a brother in the Lord, with a grave smile, and wetting with his tongue the corner of his lips—“all these things, I say, impel a man to matrimony. But, for all that, the innate antipathy of sex to sex remains unchangeable.”

He paused, and those who sat around, knowing he was a master in the science which he treated of, took up their glasses with a grave “Jess so,” “*Très bien*,” or “*Vaya*,” according to their race. No one had any single word of good to say, though all seemed to have looked into the subject carefully, without allowing prejudice of race or creed to stay them in their task.

Hoarse voices bawling vegetables or fish, with the last syllables so prolonged that the words melted into one another, and formed a cry as of a bird, broke the still air, and flies upon the sugar-basins hummed their pæans to the heat. Men shifted in their chairs, leaving damp patches when they moved, and drops of perspiration hung on their foreheads, whilst they sat waiting for the breeze which springs at evening from the overheated sea.

“*Ah, sacrées femmes,*” the Frenchman murmured, balancing his cane rocking-chair and knocking off the ash from a husk cigarette, “torment of all our lives, our only real pleasure, and yet cats all of them, yes, cats, who in the very moment of possession will strike their claws into the flesh of him who holds them in his arms, if but a thought occurs to them that they have thrown away a chance. No hearts, no heads, digestions like an ostrich, cold calculating, void of imagination, dead to the arts, and yet delightful, businesslike, sensual as monkeys, pious, by—*par bêtise*, eh?—and, tell me now, who here can say a word in their defence?”

Just as he spoke a newspaper on a cane table stirred, and every one, looking out seaward,

exclaimed at once, "The breeze!" and on the water of the bay a kind of shiver ran, a greenish tint shone on the waves, and on the distant hills the pink light deepened to a reddy-brown, the palm trees in the square seemed to erect their leaves, and in the smoking-room men gathered at the window wiping their foreheads, drinking in the wind.

The weary look which summer in the tropics brings to Europeans cleared away, and left their faces jovial or commonplace, honest, or mean or calculating, burned dark by sun and alcohol, but natural, without the corpse-like pallor which the long-heated hours had set upon their skins.

Ice chinked in glasses, and in the leaves of the hibiscus hedge about the club the fireflies darted, and the green frogs croaked musically, whilst all mankind, refreshed, laid in a stock of energy for next day's conflict with their enemy, the sun.

The Consul, having said his say, called for an *advocatus feminae*, amongst the smiles of his compeers.

One who had sat and smoked, taking no part in the debate, knocked the ashes of his pipe upon the table, and, looking round, re-

marked: "I knew a wire-walker whose history, I think, might interest some of you, and perhaps go a little way towards altering some of your opinions about the enemy."

Voices broke in on him, saying the tale was of no value if he had been the lover of the girl, for, as a fat man sagely said, speaking in broken English: "In that case you would have either hate her all your life, or else, so that you had no quarrel with her, which is impossible, or nearly so, be influence on her behalf."

The smoker, with a smile, rejoined: "Nothing of that sort. My interest was half-platonic and half-literary, with just a dash of Socialistic bias and contempt of the society in which she, I, and all of us exist."

Eyebrows were raised, and some formed an unspoken "crank" upon their lips, as he took up his tale.

"I met her at a charitable lady's house, who, though a poetess herself, or perhaps on that account, had interested herself in Victorina's fate. I forgot to tell you Victorina was her name. She looked to me exactly like a sailor, dressed as a woman—short, fair, and broad, flat-breasted as a man, her flaxen hair cut



like a boy's, her hands thick, square, and muscular, duckfooted like a ballet-dancer, and dressed in reach-me-downs."

"Yes," said the fat man, "hardness of feature is a great help to virtue. Go on, old man, no one had thought of scarecrows, and it appears to me the lady's clothes put her clean out of court at the first pop, as you may say, speaking profanely in the Yankee style."

He leered and nursed his stomach after the fashion of the obese, blew out his breath in a half-whistle, wiped his perspiring head, and settled in his chair.

"That's where you're wrong; you bet your bottom dollar," answered the story-teller, "for there was something in the sturdy little girl not unattractive, a sort of look of one well crucified by life, which, well, I don't know how, seemed to convey—that is—I liked her—that's the short of it. Wire-walking at the time was not so common as it has since become, and nets, although, of course, one knows that they are chiefly for the public, not for the acrobat, were quite unknown, so that the danger, though not much greater, seemed so, and if the walker fell

he had the chance of hitting some one who sat smoking in the stalls. This made the thing alarming, that is, of course, to the general public, who now insist on nets, saving thereby their conscience and their bones.

“She used to walk across a music-hall on a wire stretched from the flies to the top gallery, a man she called ‘my poppa’ hauling her up with a rope round her leg, letting her down again with a half coil right round the body, which by long use had left a mark, just like a serpent, in the flesh. (No, I did not examine it myself, and if you interrupt I shall dry up.) The performance was a good one of its kind, dangerous, of course, for people go to music-halls just as they go to bull-fights, or to see gladiators if they could get a licence from the County Council—hoping that some one may be killed.

“Strangely enough, once on the wire she became graceful, and the square figure in pink tights—she used to think that black were far more decent, and lament that taste forced her to pink—swayed easily and lightly in the air. As I looked at her on the wire I always used to be reminded of a flying-fish, which as it darts upon the waves is magical, but if it lands

on board is but a clammy, leaden-coloured fish, gasping its life out on the deck."

In the black darkness of the tropic night, lighted but by the fireflies and the stars, for in the clubroom lights had been put out not to attract the insects, a voice remarked, "Even a sparrow shall not fall, etc., but that says nothing about fish."

"Who flo' dat brick?" the narrator of the tale exclaimed, as said the negro, rubbing his head, when some one hit him with a stone. "But life even to wire-walkers is not all walking in the air in pink silk tights, stared at by venerable lechers, examined curiously by ladies through their opera-glasses, and when the walk is over and the neck yet unbroken, cheered by the crowd who, disappointed of the half-expected accident, applaud vociferously, partly from custom and partly for the joy of noise innate in all mankind.

"She did not know exactly who she was, where she was born, or anything about her birth. One day in Austria somewhere she remembered that a woman whom she thought was her mother, had taken her to see a man who travelled with a show. They had talked long over some beer, and then the woman went

away, leaving her with a man whom after that she called her 'Poppa,' and who had trained her to the wire. With him there was a woman, an Italian, who was cruel to her, beating her when she fell, and starving her. This she did not resent, although another child who lived with them was better treated, for she said "'Poppa" was making me a star.'

"Time passed, and she travelled round the world with 'Poppa' and the tent, performing now and then till she grew strong and skilful on the wire. 'Poppa,' it seems, was not attracted to her as a woman, and kept her safe from men, because he wished her to live cleanly, to become a star, for stars must suffer if they wish to shine, even in circuses.

"After having travelled half the world, and been in every town of Europe and America, but seeing nothing of them but their music-halls and the mean lodgings where she slept, it seems she tired of 'Poppa' and of the cruelty of the Italian woman, who was his mistress or his wife, as she believed.

"She left him and set up for herself, and having made some money, met her fate in a French engineer who hung about the wings. René had just the little culture that she lacked,

although by that time she had learned to speak most of the tongues of Europe, half like a parrot, half like a child, with all the verbs in the infinitive. René, she said, was 'rather *fainéant* because the world was hard to him, and so I thought, as it was hard to me, there would be two of us.' In person he was slight, short, dark, and sallow, his fingers stained with cigarettes, his pointed boots worn almost without heels, curved like canoes, and his large necktie of black *crêpe de chine*, tied in a bow, betrayed the man of genius who disdains hard work as too mechanical. He told her that he had waited all his life for a good woman, and that his heart was pure and undefiled, for, as he said, the body sins, we all know, but the soul is stainless, and all that matters is intention, and he was certain that his own were pure.

"That sort of man, if he be weak in body, always proves irresistible to women such as Victorina, who have been starved of love.

"She loved him as a strong-bodied, simple-minded woman loves a man weaker in physique than herself, as a dog loves his master, and as abjectly. He gave up instantly all attempt to work, and used to lounge about the circus,

holding a rope occasionally or pulling at the corner of the net spread underneath his wife with much solicitude, as well he might, seeing his fortune dangling in the air.

“They rambled through the world, she happy in her work and love; and he, getting a little weary of her as time went on, made love to other women, for, as he said, ‘man is an animal just as polygamous as another, and it is wise to follow Nature’s law.’

“He drank a little now and then, and in his cups beat his wife ineffectually, for the disparity between their strength was great. She, who could easily have strangled him or killed him with a kick, never resented it, thinking apparently that beating ‘was a necessary part of married life, sanctioned by custom and sanctified by use.

“Finding themselves at Ipswich, and with the longing for a child, for which most likely she had married René, still unsatisfied, she bought one from a tramp, giving its mother three pound ten for it, and treating it as if it were her own. René and she alike adored it, and it became the bone of their contention, each struggling for its love and striving to

supplant the other by all the arts with which a child's affection can be won.

“They fought about it almost as fiercely as theologians fight about some dogma which neither understands. Both seemed to have forgotten that it was not their own, and spoke of it as ‘ours.’ ‘My girl shall be a nun,’ the pseudo-father said, not that he was religious, but having read Lamartine in his youth, was sentimental in a half-educated way, holding a nunnery to be poetical and a fit place for one who, as he called her, was a child of misery. The woman, far more practical, after the fashion of her sex, wanted to bring her up to commerce, seeing her, no doubt, in her mind's eye, dressed in grey beige and seated at a desk setting down figures in a ledger, and in time well married to some shopkeeper, who should never know her mother's name. Both were agreed, although the child was only three years old, that she must never know her mother's calling or smell the scent of sawdust and of gas mixed with the smell of horses and of gunpowder which float in circuses.”

As he talked on the moon had risen, and his hearers, half asleep, sipping at their drink and

holding in their mouths cigars and cigarettes, mostly burnt out, cursed the mosquitoes, whilst from the sea the white, wet mist crept over everything, shrouding the mangrove swamps in silver cobwebbing and hanging on the palm-leaves till it fell dripping on the stones.

The drowsy negro waiters looked in and hoped the time had come to close, then grinned mechanically, and slipped out at the door to doze upon the floor of the verandah whilst the narrator again took up his tale.

“You fellows do not make what I call an invigorating audience,” he said, “but I must finish, for you know a tale untold is like a love that never is enjoyed—both make your heart ache and, besides, are bad for the digestion—Oh, Jango, some gin and ginger—Where was I?—Yes, I remember.

“The funny thing about the whole affair was that poor Victorina, who had passed all her life in music-halls, never suspected René, who on his part took but small trouble to conceal what he referred to as his little frailties; so that his goings on with her own maid who dressed her



for the wire, when she perceived, she took as a thing natural, although annoying, just as she would have borne the toothache or seasickness, or any other ill of life which falls like rain upon the just and the unjust, with perhaps a partiality for those less fit to bear it and to suffer its effects.

“ ‘Men have far more temptations than ourselves,’ was her remark ; ‘no wonder that they yield to them,’ and although to her, reared in some vague and kindly superstition, half Greek, half Roman, she no doubt thought marriage a sacrament to be observed by women, but to men a counsel of perfection and to the full as unattainable as is the moon.

“No doubt she suffered, but suffering was the lot which she had taken up at birth, as she had taken blows, starvation, and an occasional fall from off the wire.

“So when they started out again upon their rounds she took the girl with her and cared for her as she had been a sister ; and when her child was born never reproached her, as she said, ‘The child is René’s, and after all it has no blame ; the blame is his,

and he will leave the girl now he is tired of her.'

"But René, having tired of both of them, slipped off, taking her savings with him, and to make all complete he carried off the adopted daughter, leaving a letter saying 'he thought it was his duty to the child to save her from a life in music-halls.'

"Still Victorina struggled on, growing a little more disillusionized than before, and with her husband's mistress and her child upon her hands.

"She took to hearing Mass, not, as she said, 'in a religious way, though it is good, but chiefly it is quieting, and as I do not understand a word he says, it sounds impressive, and the incense makes me sleep.'

"Not a bad reason for a religious faith, which, had the ceremony been in the vulgar tongue, would have seemed common, for what we understand, though it be beautiful, we never value, thinking that mystery is a veil to beauty when in reality it is a shroud.

"But to return to Victorina, if you are not asleep. She never seemed afraid, and yet was certain always that she would die in harness,

so to speak—that is in tights and in a circus—‘for that is how we all die late or soon,’ she told me, ‘in our trade.’

“So I was not surprised one day to get a letter from her ‘Poppa,’ posted in New York, and read the cutting of a newspaper in the familiar style the great Republic has invented for itself.

“‘Woman falls from her wire in Coney Island, misses the net, body bounds off upon an awning—horrible panic in the theatre—society women faint—victim never moves, carried out dead. But for that tragedy it was a red-letter day for Coney Island—not only human but animal performers excelled. Elephants, horses, and a bear showed the effects of long rehearsal and of careful work.’”

The narrator stopped, and looking round the room saw that his audience mostly were asleep, only the Consul sat upright and smoked mechanically. Laying his cigarette upon an ash-tray he thanked the story-teller, and remarking, “Poor little devil, she had come into the category of women by her suffering,” strolled out into the night.

The mist had lifted from the mangroves,

and the moon shone down upon the sea, turning it into a vast silver shield, whilst on the beach the sobbing of the waves raised Nature's threnody.

## HULDERICO SCHMIDEL

OF all historians (after the Greeks), perhaps the directest and most simple-minded were those who chronicled the exploits of the discoverers of America. It may be that as some of them, like Xenophon, treated of what they had seen and done themselves, it seemed invidious to them to do more than set down what they saw. In their bald narratives, in which one sees the pen was not the instrument they had most used, sometimes there are little bits of self-revelment worth preservation by a curious man. In all their writings, treating as they did of what the world had never seen, and what they took good care for the most part the world should never see again, are many curious facts. One of the most original and most forgotten writers is Hulderico Schmidel, the first historian of Buenos Ayres and of Paraguay; but then how many historians, worthy of a better fate, sleep disregarded under the dust of libraries, on a secure top shelf. Like Bernal Diaz in Mexico,

Hulderico was both an historian and a soldier ; faith they both had, befitting " Christianos Rancios " in those days, but not the faith removing common sense and mountains.

Had any one appeared with a story of Santiago on his well-known milk-white charger rallying the Spanish arms, Hulderico would have answered as Bernal Diaz did on a similar occasion in Mexico : " It may be so, but to me, sinner that I was, was vouchsafed nothing but the sight of Francisco Morla on his old grey horse." Probably both of them would have allowed the apparition of a saint in a battle or otherwise, as a thing possible, but their credulity went no farther than it was obligatory to go. In the narratives of both, inches and feet, hundreds and thousands, get jumbled up together now and then, as they do in even more important scriptures than those which they have left. Both of them relate stories of wondrous animals and strange adventures, and of enchanted cities, but neither speaks of having seen them ; both were good soldiers and criticised their generals freely. But here the likeness stops ; for Hulderico had not the touch with the pen, no matter how he used the sword, of the historian of Montezuma and the good horse " Motilla."

Hulderico Schmidel was a Fleming or a German, and that is all we know of his nationality, except that he sailed from Antwerp, and on his return retired to Strasburg. His work originally was written in German, but a Spanish translation exists, from which I take these notes. He seems to have constituted himself historian of the expedition, on the principle of the Spanish proverb, "*A falta de buenos, mi marido alcalde.*"

Many of his Spanish names are twisted in the most marvellous fashion, and when he uses names of places and things in Guarani they become (to me at least) inextricable. Sometimes the translator seems to have been puzzled with a phrase, and leaves it in German, spelling it phonetically like Spanish. Hulderico seems to have been an honest, simple-minded man, whose greatest care was to keep his arms, especially his arquebuse, in order, for he mentions with pride that his accoutrements were always bright, and that "*Mi arcabuz siempre relucia como las estrellas.*"

In 1511 Juan Diaz de Solis, seeking for a passage to the Moluccas, had entered the estuary of the River Plate, and given it the name, then, landing on the island of Martin Garcia,

had been killed by the Chanà or the Charrua Indians. Some fourteen years before the expedition of Mendoza, Sebastian Cabot had sailed some distance up the Paraná, and built the fort of Espiritu Santo on the Caracañá, close to where now stands the city of Rosario de Santa Fé. The leader of the expedition was one Don Pedro de Mendoza, a gentleman of the town of Guadix, in the province of Almeria. Don Pedro had been secretary to the Emperor Charles V, and a courtier, and was the last man in the world to command an expedition of the kind. He undertook to pay the expenses of the expedition and to found a city, on the condition he was made *adelantado* (governor) and had certain privileges accorded to him. With him went two thousand five hundred Spaniards and one hundred and fifty Flemings and Germans, amongst whom was Hulderico Schmidel. Also in the fleet were seventy-two horses and mares, from which have sprung the countless herds of horses in the River Plate. Schmidel sailed from Antwerp in 1534. In fourteen days he arrived in Cadiz and joined Don Pedro de Mendoza's fleet, which was just about to sail. From Cadiz the fleet sailed to the Canaries, thence to the Cape



Verds, and thence “to a certain island” called Rio de Janeiro.

In this “island” the first ill-luck happened to the expedition. “There our general, being ill and very weak, named as his lieutenant one Juan de Osorio ; but shortly after, suspecting his faith, commanded four of his friends to kill him, which they did, sewing him up [*cosiendole á puñaladas*] with dagger thrusts.” Hulderico, who though a good soldier was free with his comments on his officers, remarks, “This did not please us all, as Osorio was brave and prudent, and beloved of all the soldiers.” To be loved of the soldiers was the highest praise that Hulderico had to give to any one ; and, as his history shows, to receive their love an officer had not to look too closely at what his soldiers did.

From Rio de Janeiro the fleet sailed to the River Plate, and “entering the estuary we came on a town of almost three thousand Indians, called Querandis. There we built a town, and called it Buenos Ayres on account of the wholesome airs which there prevail.” A curious little town it must have been (to judge by the woodcut in the first edition of the work), built of wood and mud, and with little turrets at

every angle, a sort of transatlantic Nuremberg, at least as imagined by the designer of the print.

“These Indians [the Querandis] brought fish and meat to the town for fourteen days, and because they missed a day, the general sent out an armed force, commanded by his brother, composed of three hundred foot and thirty horse; amongst the latter I went myself.” From the very first the blessings of civilization seem to have been made apparent to the wretched Indians. One wonders, had an armed expedition of Indians landed in Spain or England, if the inhabitants would have brought them provisions, without payment, for fourteen days.

“We found the Indians encamped to the number of four thousand, and having attacked them, they killed the brother of the general, Don Diego de Mendoza, and twenty soldiers. Their arms are tridents pointed with flints, arrows and bows, and three balls of stone tied together with a string; with these they caught and brought the horses to the ground.”

This is, I think, the first mention of the *bolos*, a weapon which has played so great a part in the life of the River Plate, and with

which the gauchos caught the soldiers in the ill-fated expedition to Buenos Ayres under General Whitelocke. Provisions seem now to have begun to fail, for "our general commanded to give out to each one three ounces of flour a day, and each third day a fish, and he who wanted any more to get it for himself." In spite of the ration of fish and bread, hunger increased so that many of the soldiers died. The Indians, too, besieged the new-built city, and almost burnt it by shooting arrows with burning straw tied to them.

The general, after having dispatched Juan de Ayolas on an expedition up the Paraná, and after leaving a garrison in Buenos Ayres "provisioned for a year at reason [*á razon de*] of a pound of bread a day, and if they wanted more to look for it," embarked for Spain, and, after having spent more than four thousand ducats and seen the expedition reduced to five hundred and sixty men, died on the voyage.

Hulderico says little or nothing about the country, nor does he tell us what the Pampas appeared like, solitary, without the horses and the cattle, peopled only by the wandering Indians, the deer, and ostriches. Nor does he, like the author of the almost contemporary

poem of the "Argentina," embellish his recital with the story of the ill-fated love of the Indian chief Siripo for the wife of the Spanish captain Hurtado, nor yet with the story of Maldonado and the lion, which in the "Argentina" is depicted so movingly that a modern naturalist from Buenos Ayres almost believes it.

Juan de Ayolas ascended the Paraguay and founded the city of Assumption. There Hulderico meets the "Carios," who eat the root *padades* which tastes like apples, and who have fish, pigs, ostriches, and Indian sheep as big as mules (perhaps the tapir), goats, chickens, and rabbits. These Indians are short and fat, and harder workers than the rest. Their city is called Lamperé (Lambaré) and is well fortified. "Now these Carios would not keep quiet [*no quisieran aquietarse*], for they had not experienced our swords or arquebuses; so we drew near and fired an artillery upon them, and they, seeing the wounds and holes in all their bodies, fled, leaving about three hundred dead."

So far so good; the most usual and expeditious way to make an Indian keep quiet has always been with swords and arquebuses. Nothing so readily convinces him of European superiority.

“We then attacked the town, and the Indians, fearing for their wives and children, asked for pardon, offering to do our bidding. Admitted to peace, they regaled [*regalaron*] our captain, Ayolas, with seven Indian girls, the oldest of eighteen years. To the soldiers they gave two girls apiece, with food and other things, and in this manner we made friends, and founded the city of Assumption, in the year of God one thousand five hundred and thirty-nine.”

The method of making friends seems to have been of the roughest, but not more so than in Matabeleland to-day, though our arquebuses are an improvement on those of Hulderico's time.

“The Cario Indians make a wine of algarroba,” called by the Germans, Joannebrot or Bockorulein; “their city is on the river which flows into the Parabol”—Hulderico always calls the Paraguay the Parabol—“and is called Fuechkamyn.”

The unfortunate translator, in a foot-note, says: “It is not easy to find out this place or to make plain the error of its name”; and, indeed, there is a most strange air of Thuringia about the spelling, which must have been most puzzling to a Spaniard. After having made

friends with the Carios, his captain sent Hulderico to Santa Catalina, in Brazil, and on their return they were wrecked in the River Plate, and all lost "except myself and five others, who swam to shore holding to the mast. We reached shore naked and without food, and had to walk eighty leagues to the town of San Gabriel, by which the grace and care of God was abundantly made manifest." The grace is, of course, a matter for theologians, but the care is not so manifest to ordinary mortals as it seems to have been to the writer of the narrative.

"Things being thus," begins the next chapter after the narration of the shipwreck, "Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca arrived from Spain with four hundred men and thirty horses." He landed in Santa Catalina and marched overland to Assumption, in Paraguay, a distance of nearly two thousand miles, with the loss of only a single soldier.

Of all the conquerors of the Indies, Alvar Nuñez was perhaps the most remarkable. Born of a great family, he had distinguished himself in Mexico, and already undergone ten years' captivity in Florida. Alone of all the conquerors he treated the Indians with strict justice, so that,

as Hulderico says, "did but an Indian wench squeal, the soldier had to suffer for it."

Ayolas, the lieutenant appointed by Don Pedro de Mendoza, being dead, the soldiers had elected Dominguez Martinez de Irala to succeed him. Irala was a Biscayan, a man of low origin but of considerable character; he eventually became Governor of Paraguay, and had already commenced the series of intrigues by which he succeeded in disgracing Alvar Nuñez, and in sending him a prisoner to Spain. For the present the pleasant days of pillage and Indian wenches' squealing disregarded were over for Hulderico, for "our new general treated the soldiers harshly, and forced us to pay for all we took." Was ever such injustice heard of? Men had not left their countries to pay for things as if they were in a mere shop in Antwerp or in Rotterdam.

Alvar Nuñez started shortly on an expedition to reach Peru by land. This was the dream of all the explorers of the River Plate as soon as they discovered there were no precious metals in that country, and in such an attempt Ayolas, the lieutenant appointed by Mendoza, died. After sailing up the river "we came to the country of the Lasacuis, who go naked and

painted in blue patterns (especially the women), and with such art that even in Germany I doubt that any of our best limners could exceed the fineness of their designs. They wear a crystal through their lower lips, and are not handsome." Here I can add my testimony to Hulderico's, for a Chaco Indian with a hole in his lower lip and a piece of crystal in it, saliva exuding through the hole, is not a pleasant sight. "After asking for peace [this seems apocryphal], we fell on them and killed many of the men, and captured many of the women, who were of great value to us."

In what their value consisted Hulderico does not reveal; but a terrible disillusion was soon to come upon him, "for the cacique came to the General Alvar Nuñez, and promised to obey the king if the women were returned. The general consented to this, considering that the Indians were subjects of the king." So that "the women of value" were lost to the soldiers, "at which they murmured." This is one of the many instances, both in Hulderico's narrative and Alvar Nuñez' own memoirs, in which he seems to have incurred great odium by protecting the Indians.

In the battle, "so numerous were the infidels that many of our men were massacred." But



“the multitude of dogs is the undoing of the hare,” observes the writer. So Hulderico went on doing his duty and slaying Indians, keeping always his arquebuse “in order and fit for service,” and noting down with some little prolixity all that he thought worth noticing, even to the dimensions of a crocodile. The study of natural history always presented a fine field for the early discoverers of America. Certainly it had difficulties unknown to-day, notably in the fact that in those days there were more animals to study. Thus we learn that the “carbuncle is a little animal which has a mirror in its forehead which shines like fire.” Also that the only safe way to kill a crocodile is to hold a looking-glass before your face, for if its eyes meet yours you certainly turn mad. “This, though, cannot be true, for I have killed above three thousand of them, and never had a looking-glass in my possession during all my pilgrimages in the Indies.” There is a butterfly, also, which turns first to a worm and then into a rat, and which destroys the crops; it feeds on human flesh, and is discriminating, too, as to the kind of man it feeds on, for “*Mas le sabe carne de un Pagano que no de Español o Castellano.*”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “La Argentina” (canto iii), contemporary poem descriptive of conquest of River Plate, by Barco de la Centenera.

This was fortunate, as the number of the Spaniards was relatively small. It should be observed, though, that Hulderico never says he saw these wonders, but only relates them as having been told by others. Many of his observations on the Indian tribes leave little to be desired for terseness, though they are not exactly descriptive, as when he says, "the Sebenes, these Indians have moustaches." One is glad to hear this, though I believe it to have been a mistake. "The Ackeres have larger stomachs than other Indians, and are swift of foot." Largeness of stomach is not invariably accompanied by fleetness of foot, but the power of observation involved does great credit to the narrator.

So he chronicles his adventures, sometimes "marching for days in water to the knees," sometimes "marching for days without a drop of water, so that even the most avaricious amongst us came to think of water as of more account than gold." At last, "having marched and sailed more than three hundred leagues, according to the calculations of those who understood the stars," the expedition came to the Lake of the Xarayes, and saw "*la casa del gran Moxo.*" This palace was "built of stones

four square, with many flanking towers, and as fair in its proportions as any castle of Spain or Flanders." This is the only instance where Hulderico's enthusiasm seems to have got the better of his judgment, for no such building of stone with towers was ever found east of the Andes. Here the expedition turned, on account of the illness of the general. The description he gives of the intrigues of Irala and final banishment of Alvar Nuñez is very much biased, as befits a soldier writing of a general who was particular about "Indian wenches," trifles into which no self-respecting conqueror should have looked too closely.

Hulderico returned to Assumption, and tells us no more of himself, of Alvar Nuñez, the "carbuncle," "the Indians with moustaches," or anything of note till at last "one day I was on guard over the well, for there was scarcity of water and the people had to drink by turns, when a letter was brought to me saying my brother was dead, and that my family prayed for my return; the letter had come in fourteen months from Cadiz." He does not seem to have considered the time excessive, but without words "I dressed myself in my best clothes, and putting on a fine red mantle I went to the

general, and laying my services before him, asked for permission to return." This was granted with many flattering phrases and a letter for the king. The general said that "I had been a faithful soldier, not anxious to slay, but always performing orders and keeping my arms and armour in good condition." "Not anxious to slay, but always performing orders," seems to reveal that "orders" had been often peremptory.

In six months, and after dangers not a few, he reached a point in Brazil, "*llamado San Gabriel asi de Cristianos como Ingleses.*"<sup>1</sup> Here he took ship to Lisbon, and arrived "with all my luggage and many parrots" after a voyage of five months. In Cadiz "I engaged a passage in the 'Henrique Lebertzen' for Antwerp." The parrots and the luggage went in another ship, and a great tempest having arisen, the ship went down, so that "I arrived in Antwerp as poor as when I left." "Still ["still" seems ambiguous], after twenty years it pleased Providence that I should arrive at the port from which I sailed, but what miseries and hungers, perils and journeyings I passed in

<sup>1</sup> The Englishman is still a doubtful Christian to the Latin races, and they, I suppose, are pagans to the Englishman.

my sojourn in the Indies is only known to God himself, to whom all praise, etc. Amen." So far Hulderico, but in a note he informs us he retired to "Estrasburgo." Perhaps when there he sometimes doubted whether Providence had really been so kind in bringing him back home. Perhaps he wandered up and down the streets seeking for sun and finding none. Perchance (like others who have known the Indies) the recollection of the adventurous life came back at times, and turned the *Leberwurst* and *Sauerkraut* to Dead Sea fruit. Perhaps he heard the parrots scream through the woods of Paraguay and saw the Paraná, its thousand islands almost awash, thicketed with seibos and lapachos with their yellow and purple flowers, smelt the sweet espinillo blossom in his nostrils, and hated Estrasburgo when he thought upon the past. Seated in a trim Dutch garden with cut box hedges and clean brick walks, dozing in some arbour over his pipe of right Varinas, perhaps he wished he had remained in Paraguay to fall by an Indian arrow like a *conquistador*, and that some other soldier had received the order to write commentaries.

## GUALEGUAYCHÚ

THE steamer glided from the yellow waters of the River Plate into a narrow channel over-arched with trees, which almost swept her deck. A thick white mist rose from the stream, which shrouded both the banks and rose half up the masts and funnel, leaving the tops of trees hanging like islands in the air. Upon their highest branches cormorants and vultures sat asleep, which at the passing of the boat awoke and screamed, then dropped into the mist.

The channel narrowed, or appeared to do so, in the gloom which brooded on the river and its banks, although the moon shone brightly and the Southern Cross was hung above our heads, the black Magellan clouds looking like mouths of funnels in the sky, deep and mysterious. Capella was just rising, and the stars, though not so bright as in the northern hemisphere, seemed far more luminous and gleamed more yellow and more phosphores-

cent, than do their sisters of the North. Carpinchos, startled from their sleep, plunged with a splash into the stream and swam for refuge to the reedy banks, their backs awash, and their flat heads stretched out upon the water, looking like giant prediluvian rats.

Moths, large as humming-birds, hung round the binnacle, making the helmsman curse, although his compass was a sinecure, as from the bow, the pilot, sounding with a cane, guided the vessel up the stream. From both the banks and from the islands with their feathery canes, the shrill mosquitoes' oboe piped its displeasing tune. Nothing was heard but now and then the pilot's nasal cry as the stream shoaled, or the faint distant neigh of some wild stallion gathering up his mares. All was so still and ghostly that the snorting of the steam seemed like an outrage upon Nature, which wept great tears of dew upon the deck, to see herself defiled.

Hours, which seemed long as days, went past, and still the steamer struggling with the current pressed into the night. At times she ran her nose against the bank, and from the trees the mist, congealed upon the leaves, poured down like rain upon the awnings and

the shrouds. At times she grounded on a sandbank, backed, and was helped by all the crew, pushing her off with poles, then, shivering, swung into the stream, strove for a minute with the hurrying water, and once more glided through the mist.

Great wreaths of *camaloté* floated past her her sides, and now and then she swerved to let a tree come swirling lazily along. At last the mist grew lighter, and the moon, sinking below the trees, showed that the morning was at hand. The stars waxed paler and the air more chilly, and men, sleeping upon the deck beneath the awning, their heads upon their saddles, with their long silver-handled knives close to their hands, stirred and drew close their ponchos in their sleep. Others sat up and lighted cigarettes, smoked silently and then lay down again, the white dew glistening on their blankets and their hair.

As the dawn brightened, and Capella fell behind the trees, the whistle sounded, echoing through the woods. The vessel edged into the bank, as if by instinct, and her sides rubbed against a pier made of rough planks and almost level with the stream. Some sleepy soldiers, smoking cigarettes, came



through the mist like spectres and a man dressed in uniform stepped from the pier on to the deck, went down below, and in a little while came up again, wiping his lips, and with an air of having done his duty to the State.

The passengers, each with his hand-bag, or his saddle, as the case might be, stumbled ashore, and took their way through a rough path cut in the woods, which, after half a mile, came out upon a plain, and a short league away beheld the town, flat-roofed and white, silent and shining in the rising sun.

A diligence, which should have met the steamer, drawn by six horses driven, and one in front on which a ragged boy, half gaucho, half town loafer, rode, whirled in a cloud of dust towards them, and they, scaling it as it were a fortress, were jolted to the town.

Stuck like a chessboard on a table, on the plain, and with the streets all intersecting one another into squares, the houses all flat-topped and painted white, and with the towers called *miradores* looking like minarets, and the church dome resembling a mosque, it had a sort of Oriental look. The sandy unpaved streets, in which lean yellow dogs prowled after offal all the day, and howled at night in

chorus at the moon, smacked also of the East. There the resemblance ended, and the line of posts, to almost every one of which a horse was tied, and the great stores, in front of which stood horses hobbled, for no one went on foot above two squares, was purely Argentine. Horses pervaded all the place, in every open space they fed attached to ropes, in all the yards they stood up to the fetlocks in black mud, or in hot dust, according to the season of the year, and ate alfalfa, or were led down to water by their owners, with the long picket rope known as a *mañador* curled like a lasso in the hand. Men dressed in loose black cashmere trousers, with high patent-leather boots, the tops all worked in patterns with red or yellow thread, their ponchos fluttering in the wind, rode past on silver-mounted saddles and with bits furnished with cups of silver on each side the mouth, and with an eagle wrought in silver moving with every step below the horse's mouth. Their horses, with manes hogged to the middle of the neck, leaving upon the withers a long lock six inches wide to mount by, snorted and passaged at the strange sights of town, tried to whip round and spring across the street like goats, if a dog

stirred, or a door fastened with a bang. Sometimes if they had eaten corn, a feat which often took them days to learn and which they only learned on being tied up without food, they trotted slowly at the *paso castellano*, their long tails squared off at the fetlock joints, swinging as if in rhythm to the short jogging trot. Their riders with their hats kept on by strings of silk with tassels underneath the chin, their bridle hand held high, and on the right their flat hide whips just dangling on their horse's quarters to keep him to the bit, assumed the far-off look of an ineffable content which horsemen, mounted on a horse that does them credit, put on quite naturally in every quarter of the world.

Wild and barefooted boys, on bare-backed ponies, careered about the outskirts of the town, and the one beggar of the place, an old Canarian, rode a thin horse and when he saw a charitable face, took off his hat and mumbled, "For the love of God," receiving what was given, as his due, for alms are not a favour to the receiver, but to the giver, who thereby lays up for himself treasures beyond the skies, where beggars are not, and where horses, if they exist, are winged like Pegasus. It was a

gaucho town that lived upon the "camp," as people styled the adjoining country in the pidgin-English of the place. A town in which all men went armed, their knives and pistols sticking out below their coats, and where, if you were so inclined, on any pretext you might fight with any one, no questions asked, and if you killed your man, get on your horse and ride into the "camp," secure of never being caught, so that you did not venture into town, or run by accident into the hands of the police. During the hot hours of the day all slept, leaving the streets deserted and the stores wide open, so that a man could walk into them and knocking with his whip upon the counter or the door, find no one, till at last some sleepy shopman would appear and say that business was suspended, and retreat, cursing, to his bed. The sun declining put new life into the town, and in the various stores men sat and talked and criticised the horses and the women as they passed. Still later on, the evening brought the ladies of the place into the plaza, all dressed in Paris fashions of a year ago, to saunter up and down in groups beneath the orange trees, in which the fire-flies flitted, making the heavy leaves seem all alive with

light. As they passed by, a fire of compliments was turned on them, which they pretended not to hear, and yet were piqued if no one paid them, for as the saying was, even a compliment from a black man is better than indifference from a prince.

In the still air the tinkle of guitars sounded like Cupid's sheep-bells, and at the iron-grated windows on the streets men stood, flattening themselves against the bars, to talk to women, whom the judicious custom of the place only allowed to see their lovers with a stout iron railing set betwixt the two.

Between a male and female saint a wall of bricks and lime, the proverb says, but a stout iron bar aids virtue plaguily.

Although the streets were all deserted after ten, through the wide-open windows and the doors of patios you saw the richer people of the place, seated at tables playing cards or dancing, and at the window-bars the loafers stood, as at a theatre, but now and then giving forth their opinions of an ankle or a foot, not disrespectfully but with the freedom of the Spanish race, which holds all men, as men, are equal, and that the want of money does not debar a man from being human, or its possession raise him to a god.

The lower classes congregated in the *pulperías*, and there drank gin and maté, danced the "*cielito*, the *gáto*," and the *pericon*, and not infrequently got drunk and fought with their long silver-handled knives. They played at *monté*, each producing his own pack, marked at the back (so that he knew each card as it was dealt), and striving to impose it on the rest. They, knowing well the trick, preferred a neutral pack, which, although marked, was yet unknown to any of the players, and having made a bank, they gambled desperately, so that a man, having begun well dressed, with silver-mounted arms and belt well stocked with dollars, not seldom left the place stripped to his trousers and his shirt.

The foreigners assembled at one of the hotels, either at Ellerman's or at the *Fonda del Vapor*, kept by a Basque, Don Pedro, where they drank and sang, roaring the choruses of comic songs, after the fashion of boys at public schools or sailors in a port.

Don Pedro owned a long and flat-roofed house, built round a courtyard in which there was a well. Above the doorway hung a model of a steamboat made in wood, from which the

*fonda* took its name. Broad in the beam, and painted blue and red, the funnel like a mast, and with enormous paddle-boxes, on one of which the captain, dressed in a general's uniform, girt with a sword, appeared to bellow through a speaking-trumpet to the stars, the model might have served for a museum in some inland capital, where none had seen the sea. But yet it was Don Pedro's pride, and pointing to it, he would say, "Steam, . . . si, señor, the steam is the great power which I have heard Prometheus stole from heaven; it means our life, for life is progress, and there can be no progress without steam." Not that, for all his aphorism, Don Pedro differed from his fellow-countrymen, who slow and steady, and as obstinate as a male mule, are able, it is said, to drive a nail into the door by beating on it with their heads, and then when driven home, to draw it with their teeth.

The rooms all looked upon the patio, and it was well, after an evening of caña punch and song, to shut the door and put the candle out of sight, for the chief form of wit was shooting at the lights, and as you sat and read, a pistol shot was pretty sure to knock the plaster from the wall, close enough to your head to make

things dangerous, as the man firing generally was drunk. The rooms were bare, but for a wooden folding-bed known as a *catré*, a chair, a table, and a washing-stand. Don Pedro's pride was centred in his dining-room, which was adorned with various French prints of hunting scenes, all highly coloured, in which the hunters in high-collared coats and bushy whiskers, girt about with knives, rode centaur-like. One was entitled "Fox-hunting to the Wild Boar," and showed a monstrous beast as bulky as a hippopotamus careering on the grass. The hunters to the boar rode after him, all clad in green, with high and shining boots, from their left sides there dangled cutlasses, and round their bodies horns like ophicleides. "Fox-hunting to the Deer" showed a strange animal much like an antelope, loping across the fields with a great company of beagles following at his heels, all lolling out their tongues. Last scene of all set forth the kill, which was enacted in a pigsty, wherein the deer had fled, and where a huntsman manfully butchered her with a cutlass; the pack of beagles sitting on their hams, look like peccaries when they have run a man into a tree, and watch expectantly.



To the hotel there gravitated the more respectable of the young English cattle-farmers, a fair proportion of French bagmen, and some substantial Basques who, as Don Pedro was a countryman, gave him patronage. One or two wool-buyers from Buenos Ayres, and an Italian engineer or two, who loafed about, waiting for contracts to build a bridge or make a railway to the moon, and several experts in what were known as fruits of the country (*frutos del país*) consisting of, in general, hides, with hoofs and horns, and salted beef to send to Cuba and to Brazil, to feed the slaves on the plantations, made the contingent commerce furnished to the house.

Science contributed two German lepidopterists, who in their rooms pursued their mystery in a strong smell of camphor, and at meals ate solidly, their knives and forks clinking upon their teeth like foils in a sharp bout. Captain McCandlish, too, was there, a worthy mariner, who, having lost his ship for drunkenness, passed all his life regretting the old days, when in the 'fifties he had had a brig in the South Seas. Much did he dwell upon the islands and the life: "Conceity folk, yon Kanakys, ye ken. The weemen too, sort

of free living . . . juist vera leetle prejudice about them. I mind one o' them doon in Eromango . . . dod no, long before the missionaries cam', spoilin' the place. I cana' bear a Kanaky, in breeks, ye ken . . . seems to corrupt them . . . fine buirdly bodies, but European clothes mak's them upsettin'.

"Weel, this gurl, ye see; lads . . . I dinna care to mind about her, whiles I juist think I never should have left the islands. . . . Awfu' easy life; taro, ye ken, is handy planted, handier far than tatties . . . a bonny climate too, and then the weemen. Man, I think I was a fool to leave the islands, and to fetch up in this mud turtle, round-bottomed sort o' a smouchin' toon, where everything is dear, and no a body kens the dogvane from the kingston valve. Hech, sirs, I think I was a fool."

Then he would snort in his red pocket-handkerchief, light up his pipe (he "couldna' stan' thae cigareets"), call for more whisky, and stagger down the street, lurching a little in his gait, as if he was at sea.

Within a square of the hotel was set the police-station and in a lane hard by some huts in which some half-caste "Chinas," with several Mulatas, and two or three Hungarian and

German girls, become too faded for the capital, sat painted at their doors. Vice was so unattractive, set as it was in a mud hovel, thatched with straw, that many, whom the love of virtue bound but lightly, yet were virtuous from disgust. Whether the moral gain was great, only the moralist can say, and he was an infrequent visitor in those days, either at Ellerman's or at the Fonda del Vapor. In fact morality was looked at in the larger or the Latin way, with the result that on the whole life was far cleaner than in Anglo-Saxon lands, where nature being what it is, the same things happen but are rendered meaner by concealment; the homage, as they say, vice pays to virtue, but which makes virtue, as it were, compound a felony and smirches both of them.

Racing and cock-fights were the national sports, the former for short distances, two or three furlongs, with innumerable false starts, all of set purpose and with the object of tiring out the weaker horse before the race began. Barefooted and with silk handkerchiefs tied round their heads, a custom which they evidently took from the Indians, who tied a woollen string called *vicha* round their brows, and with their flat-thonged whips hung on their

wrists, the riders made pretence to give their horses all their head, leaning well forward on their necks and shouting wildly, but all the time they held them well in hand. As all the starts were flying and by mutual consent, if one man saw his horse was but an inch behind the other's, or if he noticed that his adversary's horse (for all the races were confined to two) was getting out of hand, he stopped and, getting off, walked slowly back again up to the flag. This naturally upset the temper of a violent horse, who at the next attempt would rear and plunge, and break out sweating, and perhaps run half the course before he could be stopped. When at the last they got away, each shouted "*Vamos,*" and then they plied their whips, the horses close to one another, for if a man could bore the other rider off the course he won the race.

But at this game all gauchos were adepts, as well as that of trying to kick the opposing horse's chest, to put their feet below the other rider's heel and hurl him to the ground, all which was reckoned fair, and part of racing, just as at cards they had a code of signs which were allowable, but in both cases, tricks and signs were all conventional, and nothing might

be done, except what wont and immemorial use had rendered sanctified.

To a low building built in a circle and looking like a little bull-ring the sportsmen of the town repaired on Sundays, nearly all carrying cocks beneath their arms, or balanced on the pommels of their saddles as they rode. To show that nationality was no bar to sport, the committee had drawn up rules and invitations in several tongues ; the one in English ran : " Sunday and other holly days there are large cock-fight. The native and the foreign cock is both accepted, and are accepted all kind of cock whatever his prevention." To make all clear, at the bottom of the page was written " The direction," which the composers of the document imagined had the same meaning in an English as in a Latin tongue. English or French or Spanish, or no matter what the tongue, all men were equal in the arena of the cocks. The love of blood and money, the two strongest passions, write what they please of love, levelled down most of them to a mere mass of animals, with bloodshot eyes, mouths open and their lips drawn back upon their teeth, sweating with interest, and following every wound the birds inflicted with

their sharp steel spurs, all pity laid aside, and for the time savage as tigers, ready to quarrel with their brother if the red cock struck out the other's eye and he had criticized the stroke.

The remnant, those who cared not for the blood, and in whom the skill and fortitude of the trained cocks neither excited nor evoked compassion, called the odds with regularity, marking each turn in every combat, and when at last the victor dashed his spur down through the brains, and then himself fell dead beside his foe, just crowing out his victory as he fell, stretched out their hands to take the dollars that their bird had gained them with his life, with a low chuckle of content.

But when in England or in South America did life, either of man or beast, stand any chance when there was money to be made? The only difference is, that here we try to hide from others and ourselves the motives of our deeds, and there they stuff the dollars dripping red with blood into their pockets and light their cigarettes.

The town, such as it was, when first the little stern-wheel steamer groped through the mist, her decks swept by the dripping boughs

of ñandubay and espinillo, no longer now exists.

No doubt the house in which they tortured Garibaldi, hanging him by the thumbs and flogging him across the face with raw-hide whips, has long made way, perhaps for a new church, perhaps for some smart bar-room, in the Yankee style.

No longer in the shady lanes Paz and Dolores sit waiting for their customers, playing guitars, and with their pictures of a saint above their beds. Ladies from Paris and from Buda-Pesth, not so religious, but as superstitious to the full, no doubt adorn the town, driving their trade, and keeping their accounts by double entry, with the view of honourable retirement in their riper years when paint has failed and drink imparts no lustre to the eyes. The loafers cannot any longer stare in through the *rejas* on the ladies at a ball and criticise their clothes. Increasing wealth no doubt has set a bar betwixt the classes, making the poor man feel his poverty, and the rich know that isolation is the best weapon in the fight that he must wage. Who would allow a horse to stray about, now that no doubt his price is trebled, or to stand hobbled in a street, when all drive

motors, and he would be in danger of his life? A vast and tin-roofed "terminus," in which the engines scream and whistle all the night, is the chief labarum of progress, and all who see it, with the smoke from its workshops hung across the sky, bow and adore it and are satisfied. Few still remain, who can recall the days, when taking horse a man could ride to Corrientes, without an obstacle to stop him on his way, but flooded rivers, if it should chance to rain, or want of water if there was a drought.

Those were the days when on a journey man took no thought for food, for riding to a house, if by some chance there was no meat in the *galpon*, they said, "You have a *lazo*—eh? The cattle are but half a league away—out on the rise, beyond the round Ombu. Well, go and kill a cow, take all the meat you want, but leave the hide; the owner does not like his brand to turn up in a parcel of strange stuff . . . and so . . . with God."



## LA CAMARGUE

SWEPT by the winds of Africa which meet the winds of the Swiss mountains and the north; winds and more winds which never cease; scorched by the sun in summer and in the winter scourged by cold, it looks upon the sea.

Salt marsh and waste of aromatic herbs, great heathy plains towards the east, and to the west alluvial steppes without a stone, but broken here and there by patches of grey olive woods and vineyards, a line of sandhills runs along the beach which opens to a little bay where the three Marys landed from the East. It still remains a shadow of the past—a melancholy region of decaying towns with medieval walls, in which the sparse inhabitants look out of place, as beggars herding in some vast Italian palace which has seen better days.

It seems as if a portion of the Pampa between Bahia Blanca and the Romero Grandé had got adrift and floated out to sea, and then got stranded on the fertile plains of France. A land of vast horizons, mirages, quick change of temperature, of violent

tempests, mosquitoes, ague, fever, of flights of red flamingoes, fierce black cattle, and the white horses which tradition says the Arabs left there after the rout at Tours. In hardly any other part of Europe does the old world, the world before the Middle Ages, still maintain itself as strongly as in this island in the marshy delta of the Rhône.

When Cæsar knew it and long afterwards when Musa and his Saracens passed by upon their march to Tours, it could not have been very different from what it is to-day. The railway crosses it, but railways in a plain have not the strength to force themselves upon the landscape as amongst hills, and only make a track such as a snail leaves on a window-pane.

The island does not seem intended to be lived in but by the horses and the kine, and should be kept, just as Segovia and Toledo should be kept, as a memento of the past to show men what the world was like before they spoiled it with their manufactories. The scattered hamlets grouped around their churches look primitive and at the same time unsubstantial as if they had been built by the lacustrine dwellers of a bygone age, or like an Indian camp of wickeyups.

Round most of them the marshes stretch, and from them rises up a hum of shrill mosquitoes' pipes, as if they challenged man to live there at his peril and presaged fever and unquiet sleep to the invaders of their realm. And in effect inhabitants are few. Your plainsman seldom is gregarious, and on this heathy sea of scrubby aromatic plants the infrequent herdsman with his lance looks like a Guaycurú or Arab, and as remote from modern European life as either of them, sitting immovable in his high-peaked Montpellier saddle and looking out across the plains.

'Tis said that long before the Romans, Greeks, and Saracens, the inhabitants adored the sun. Perhaps of all the peoples of their continent, they were alone in this, their almost reasonable faith. No doubt to wile them from their bright belief, to the sad Galilean mystery, the Marys, she of Mágdala, Maria Jacobé, and Mary Salomé with Trophimus and Saturninus, Cleon and Lazarus, Sidonius, Joseph of Arimathea, and the rest of the strange errant saintly company which landed on the dunes just where the old Byzantine church is built, sought out their shores.

Mary of Mágdala who, one would have

thought, had long ago wiped off her sins upon the Saviour's feet, retired into the desert; one of those earthly purgatories which all saints had ever at command to serve them as a step to heaven, and having sought the Holy Cave, she passed her life in prayer. The other Marys, one the mother of St. James the Great, the other of the lesser James, with Sarah, an old servant who had been a slave, lived and died where they landed, on the spot where afterwards their church was built, and which still bears their name.

Joseph of Arimathea, who, though a Christian, yet was a rich man, passed on to England, and was lost among the mists. The rest remaining in the land preached and evangelized, and for a testimony of their success they left their features stamped upon a rock so that all men might see them and venerate their deeds. They wrote their names in stone, but Mary Magdalene, more pious and poetical than they, preserved her name in tears, which, falling from her eyes, were, by the grace divine, turned to a river, which issuing from the cave, where she wept daily at her prayers, carries her sins out to the sea, where they are lost amongst the waves.

Their memory will endure whilst the stone

still retains their images, and whilst the creed they preached is venerated, but hers can never die as long as water runs and grass grows green and the *mistrál* raises her *córonach*.

But in despite of saints and of their shrines, of pilgrimages, of holy caves, legends and miracles so well attested that to believe them would imply a faith in human testimony that contact with humanity rubs off, the ancient faith still lives.

Neither in Naples nor in Seville is life more joyous, nor does the fear of the dread mysteries which the virgins and the saints crossed over sea to inculcate, weigh less upon the mind. In all three places a reasonable and satisfying superstition fills men's souls, but does not influence their lives, more than the faith in Jupiter and Mars, Diana, Venus, and the rest of high Olympus influenced the ancients, that is, those ancients who, like the people of La Camargue, thought the first duty of a government was to give bread and bulls.

In the old towns which ring the river island all about, each with its aqueduct and temple, the Roman type remains, and any woman in the streets with her black hair, full bust, and low broad eyebrows could step into an

amphitheatre, and gloat upon a gladiator's agony, turning her thumb down if he fought badly, or was not a personable man, with as much relish as she now enjoys the dying struggles of a horse, or, as in England, ladies watch a pheasant writhing its life out by a green covert side.

But the intense and ancient life runs stronger in the country than the towns. The guardians of the cattle form a race apart, unique in Europe, for the brown herdsmen of the plains between Lebrija and the hills of Ronda, although they pass their lives on horseback, are in the main men of the village or the town, whereas the Camarguais are as true countrymen as are the Arabs or the Mexicans. In this forgotten nook of Europe, hedged about by the tall reeds which fringe the Rhône, and the white sands which border on the sea, if it is true that Saracens once passed, it is quite certain that they left some of their customs deeply rooted in the land.

Whence comes the high Montpellier saddle, with its cantle rising well above the waist, and its iron stirrups covered in to save the toes? Where in all Europe but in Southern Spain, where men are partly Moors by blood and by

inheritance, is to be seen the bit with the high port, and the long reins, joined at the middle and finishing in a flat whip, and where the hand held high, to turn the horse upon his neck, and not to heave him round by pulling at his mouth? The active horses and the tall, silent, swarthy men, might all be African, although veracious history, so careful of her generalities, so careless of her facts, does not inform us that the Saracens had time to intromit, as Scottish law-books phrase it, with the women of the land.

To give the infidel his due—and if we give it to the devil, why not extend it to the infidel?—he usually did not take long to intromit with all the women that he came across, but in this instance time was wanting, so it seems strange he should have left his horse-lore; but the fact remains. These customs are not relics of the Middle Ages, for the old knights rode differently and the bits they used were such as were required to pull up Flemish demi-elephants and not to turn a pony lightly as a seagull whirls upon the wing, after the fashion that the men in the Rhône delta use.

To see them bring a “point” of cattle up to the rude corral in which they shut the bulls

before a bull-fight, takes one back to Mexico or the South Pampa, Nebraska or to Queensland, and makes one wonder why it is these centaurs do not emigrate with their wives, families, and stock to Venezuela and settle up some "llano" hitherto unpeopled, founding a race apart and uncommercialized as the Moors from Granada might have done, when the Red Towers were won.

Just swaying in the saddle, with the bridle hand held high, the hat blown back, and kept in place by a black ribbon underneath the chin, and in the right hand the long lance, tipped with the crescent and called a "trident" in La Camargue, the herdsmen dash about the sandhills (there is no sane man on a horse's back), their ponies' shoeless feet cutting the ground just as a skate cuts ice, shouting the while, out of the joy of life, and the proximity of death. The bulls, just as in Spain, led by an ox or two that wear bells, come snorting up to the corral, then stop and wheel, and plunge away into the maze of sandhills by the sea. The guardians float after them, their ponies' manes and tails streaming like foam from off a wave into the air, just as a swallow rushes at a gnat. The people shout, and in a



cloud of dust the bulls are brought up with a rush, causing the men and boys to fly for safety up the posts of the corral, on to the wheels of carts, or up the gratings of the windows of the houses, to which they cling like flies.

The wooden bars are let down with a clang, the animals driven into an inner pen, and the whole village breaks out in a shout of "*Lagadigadon*," as if each man by his own strength and skill had done the feat, instead of having stood and gossiped till the bulls rushed past.

The riders slowly dismount, unloose their girths, light cigarettes, and taking out their knives scrape off the sweat from just behind the girths where the hard spurring leaves a bloody foam. The horses stretch themselves and yawn, and then stand panting, looking at one another out of the corner of their eyes.

The corralling over, in the Byzantine church of the three holy Marys the bell "chaps" out, and the whole population headed by the mayor goes in to mass, the horsemen, after the fashion of their kind, sitting down in the sand, to talk of horses and of cattle, and illustrating what they say with diagrams drawn with the points of knives.

Mass over, and the whole village having dined, seated at wooden tables before the cafés in the main street, the bull-ring fills, the local firemen's band braying out the strains of songs from the music-halls in the sailors' quarter of Marseilles.

Three or four chosen guests mount a rude "shoggly" platform, only just beyond the reach of the bull's horns, and the mayor tells the chief fireman to blow a fanfare on the horn, announcing that he will give, drawn from the funds of the municipality, five francs to any one who can pull off a tricolour rosette pinned to the forehead of the bull.

In a moment all the huge corral fills up with ragamuffins and fishers from the shore, the nameless loafers who in every town throughout the world work hard at keeping up the houses by leaning up against the walls, and one or two assistants from the little shops, who give themselves what they think is the air of Spanish bull-fighters. As no one has a cloak, and for all means of keeping off the bull his jacket or a sack, the task is not so easy as it might be thought. Not that the loafers care to risk their skins, with the exception of the one or two who, having drunk sufficiently, get

rolled about like barrels by the bull. After some twenty minutes, and when the bull stands panting in the middle of the ring, and all the loafers having fled for refuge are seated safely on the bars of the corral, the cornet sounds again, and the mayor beckoning for silence as did St. Paul at Athens, rises and says that the sum now is doubled, and the sport begins again.

The mayor's munificence by this time had attracted to the ring a plumber, who putting down a basket with his tools, walks into the ring. The people seem to know him, and mutter that he is a "*lapin*, who has no cold about his eyes," a thing quite evident, for, taking off his coat, he makes some "passes" quite in the style of Cúchares, and as the bull charges and passes him, snatches the cockade from its horn, and walks up quietly to the mayor, amongst the people's cheers. He gets the largess, and another bull is let into the ring, the first being taken out by the tame oxen, who decoy him to the gate.

After a sailor from Marseilles has got more largess, two herdsmen, armed with "tridents," come into the ring, and when the bull runs at them, catch him on their poles, and hold

him for an instant, bellowing. Loud cheers salute the feat, which wants a good eye and a steady hand, and then the populace, just as they do in Spain, invades the ring, and has a pleasant twenty minutes with the bull.

Lastly, the mayor, placing himself before the firemen's band, adorned with his three-coloured sash, and in a hat coeval with the Third Empire, marches majestically across the ring, and the day's sport is done.

Then evening falls upon the little town, and in the vast and solitary marshes the herdsmen with their long "tridents" in their hands, held high like spears, convey the bulls back to their pasturage, their ponies snorting and passaging as the stiff breeze blows up the spindrift from the sea. Night shuts the scene, and the dull roar of surf upon the beach fills the immensity of marsh and sandhills, whilst from the pastures where the cattle feed come bellowings and the strange sounds which rise at night from lands uncultivated, where man has not been able to subdue and fetter Nature, forcing her with his plough and spade to give him crops, enslaving her just as he is enslaved himself by progress, with its ten thousand unnecessary wants, become necessities.

All that is left of the old disappearing life is doomed—the small black cattle will give place to shorthorns, the semi-wild white ponies to that well-bred stock, as little interesting as is the man who breeds it, and the black smoke of factories desolates the sky.

A melancholy and mosquito-haunted land it is, where beavers still are said to lurk, although unseen by all except tradition's piercing eye, which has immortalized them, and will not wot of their decease. A land once seen, which haunts you always, with its white horses and its fierce black bulls, its sun, *mistrál*, its fevers, ague, and the mist which floats above the marshes where the cattle harbour, seeking protection from the flies.

Charlemagne and Roland, Saracens and Goths, the Greeks, the Romans, Cæsar and the Phœnicians saw it and passed by, upon their way to history. Perhaps they thought it not worth occupation, and left it desolate, to the flamingo and the ibis to possess and populate. They saw and left it; but for its chiefest honour it still holds the bones now purified by tears, of the adulteress whom Jesus loved, and its chief saint is Mary Magdalene.

## ON THE SPUR

PRINCES had smiled upon him. All London had admired the tall lithe figure dressed in white. Uncomprehended and uncomprehending, he had talked with ministers and statesmen, and had sat silent with restless eyes at theatres and at reviews, glancing with tacit approbation at the battalions of strong sun-burned men, and at the ranks of bare white shoulders in the boxes and the stalls. What he had thought, when he returned to the great stucco house in Bayswater, thronged all the day with Jews and *rastaquouères* and at night silent, and with some of the mystery of the East, redeeming even the commonness of mid-Victorian architecture, no man can tell.

No doubt, the two veiled women, who like bundles had accompanied him, asked questions as to the wonders of the mighty Londrès, which roared all day and night outside, but which they, bound in their haiks and the convention of their husbands' faith, had never seen but through their veils when peeping from a window,

or through the blinds when driving in the town. But in the intervals of visiting our public institutions or our cotton mills, and as he listened to the promises of statesmen assuring him of England's interest in the welfare of Morocco, and of protection for himself, the tall young Arab Chief Menebhi no doubt thought anxiously of what was going on at Court in far Marâkesh, where, as he knew, his rivals were at work. At last, word came that all was over, and that England which had lionized him for a whole month had got another idol, and with the cross of some Victorian order was waiting civilly to send him on to Germany, where the same flatteries and promises were ready at Berlin.

There without doubt he saw the pomp and state of German militarism, watched educated men turned to machines skirmish and counter-march, whilst all the time rumours arrived from home that his liege lord the Sultan was being warped against him by his foes. Days followed days, and still the weary round of ceremonies, which held him half impatient half attracted, succeeded one another, whilst telegrams and letters from his friends urged his return if he set store upon his life.

When, from the quay at Bremerhaven he stepped aboard the steamer, with his two wives well veiled, his suite and all the useless things, as snuff-boxes from which sprang singing birds, electric toys, repeating watches, and all the costly trash which Orientals buy in Europe, his heart must have rejoiced.

Our pomp and state and noise, our crowds and all the rushing to and fro of modern life, delights an Oriental for a time. He sees our trains and steamers, our telegraphs and telephones, and marvels at them, but in a little while they pall upon him, and his mind, not to be deceived with symptoms, goes at once to causes and sometimes actually, at others with a sort of instinct, he asks himself, are these men happier than we for all their miracles?

He knows a watch is useful, and prefers a gun that kills a mile away to one that carries but a hundred yards, and is quite ready to accept all our inventions, even to railways and to telegraphs, for they seem natural things and admirable in that they save exertion, but on the understood condition that he shall take and use them, but not change the essence of his life. So would a cave-dweller, and almost every savage, eagerly clutch a sword and throw away



his club, if it were offered to him, but each would know, as does the Oriental, that for himself his way of life is best.

During the voyage the ex-ambassador must have paced anxiously enough about the deck, or, squatted on a cushion, looked out on the horizon as earnestly as did the sailor in the "Pinta's" shrouds, when the New World was known to be at hand. No doubt occasionally he asked the officers why, if the ship could steam her sixteen knots, she could not manage sixty, for with a miracle so great as was the art of navigation, surely all things were possible, and but a matter of more coal.

When the low coast line with the lonely sea without a sail appeared, and the brown walls of Mazagan, with its mosque towers, and its half-dozen palm trees came in sight, and as the boats came dancing through the surf, the tall white figure paced about the deck. To land, to meet some faithful friends, to greet the governor, all with an air of being still in favour, and as a man who, having stood before the kings of Europe, was anxious for an audience with his lord, must have been as the rack to him, but still he bore it quietly, speaking to all, with the attention due to each particular

and individual man. Then as he ambled on his mule through the unpaved and dusty streets, a messenger from his own tribe walking beside his knee, as if to welcome him, gave him the news of his disgrace. He learned the Sultan, young and inexperienced, and left to flatterers, all of whom were eager to supplant the minister, too far away to speak a word in his defence, had turned away his face.

Horses, the tribesmen said, were ready, and on the road a strong detachment was in waiting to ride with him to Court and to protect him on the way. He made no sign, but rode impassively out to a saint's tomb, just beyond the walls, ostensibly to pray. Sending his secretary, a thin brown doctor of the law from Mecca, to get his wives and property ashore, he prayed with all the bowings and prostrations which his faith required, and which as in like cases in most creeds, have by degrees become more vital than the prayer.

His tribesmen waited silently until the long formalities which pass between an Arab and his God had been completed, and then when he had shuffled on his shoes and stood erect, poured out their news in the succession of quick snapping gutturals which makes a

stranger think that they are on the point of murder, when but engaged in a quiet talk about the price of cows or barley at the sok.

Whilst absent in Berlin and London, it appeared that, bit by bit, the confidence of the young Sultan had been undermined. Menebhi, so it seemed, had been accused of having borne himself more as a Sultan than an envoy; of having worn the hood of his burnous drawn forward covering his head when he had stood before the Christian kings, as if he were their equal, and the like. Such accusations, if they be vague enough, always impress an Oriental's mind, and in this case the poison had sunk in, and El Menebhi was advised that on his arrival at Marákesh he would be straight disgraced. Disgrace with Orientals usually carries loss of property, and not infrequently, of life. Some urged immediate flight to Europe, others that refuge should be taken with some consul in Tángier; some that he should remain encamped and send a messenger to argue out the case.

He, getting off his mule, called for green tea, drank the three semi-sacramental cups in silence, holding the silver ring which keeps the amber ball in place inside the cup, with his lean

index finger, and then calling the head men of the deputation, said :—

“ I start at once for Court ; bring me a horse, one that can do the distance within thirty hours, and send a man on a swift-pacing mule to warn the tribe. Three hundred men of powder are to meet me at El Saghariz.”

As he ceased speaking, the setting sun just falling on the yellow walls of Mazagan turned them to orange, then to rose-pink, and lastly to a violet tinge, which made the whitewashed houses look unnatural and ghastly, as the sea-breeze sprang up and caused the leaves of palm trees to rattle on their trunks.

The call to prayers rang out, prolonged and quavering, and the grave storks upon the battlemented walls appeared to listen to it, turning their heads and chattering their beaks. At corners of the streets and in the open spaces in the negro village just outside the walls, dotted with castor-oil plants and with cactuses, those of the faithful who felt themselves impelled, engaged in prayer, rising and falling like automata.

Men led their horses down to water, letting them jump about and wallow in the sand like buffaloes, and at the wells the women filled

their water-jars, whilst the sea-breeze just rustled from the west.

As the last call rang out, repeated from the different towers and taken up in the straw hut which, in the negro village, serves as a mosque, and given back reverberating from the hot walls in one continuous peal as if the callers were determined to take Allah's ear by storm ; wake him, if sleeping ; or call him back, if on a journey ; Menebhi mounted, settled his haik, raising himself erect in the short Arab stirrups, and leaning back against the cantle of his high red saddle, touched his horse sideways with the spur, and struck into the road. His friends and tribesmen, after a hurried blessing, swung themselves some upon their horses, others on their mules, and then the shadowy white figures melted into the night, their horses' footsteps muffled in the sand, making the line of horsemen look like their own ghosts. They pushed along, their bridles jingling, and their horses swerving now and then as a wild boar broke from the bushes with a grunt, through the thick scrub which for a league or two circles about the town. Then striking into a grey stony tract in which grows now and then a caroub tree, and now and then some patches of white

broom, they reached a well just as the false dawn reddened the sky, and as the freshness of the night turned chilly, making them draw their haiks and their burnouses tighter and tie their handkerchiefs around their necks to stop their hoods from falling back in the cold air.

Hard by a saint's tomb near the well where grow palmettoes, dwarfs of their species, twisted and gnarled, fantastic-looking in the half light when moon is down and sun not risen, and stars above shine coldly through the night, they lighted down. Taking a carpet from a mule, they squatted silently upon it, whilst a black slave made tea, their horses standing with their girths loosened, and the blood dripping down from their flanks, where in the rapid march the edges of the stirrups and the spurs had bitten through the skin. They yawned, their eyes disappearing almost in their heads, rested a leg, and laying back one ear pricked the other forward, listening to every noise, neighing occasionally, and now and then rising and striking at each other with their feet. The mules dozed quietly, their huge red saddles making them look like hobby-horses in a pantomime. Drinking his tea, which he did noisily as a duck eats a weed beneath the

water of a pond, a sign of breeding amongst Arabs and the Moors, Menebhi sat, his shoes kicked off, pale and fatigued, for during the past months he had not ridden, but yet resolute.

“How are the beasts,” he said, “Si Hamed? I want to reach the tomb of Sidi ibn Nor at daybreak, for if we do, and meet the tribesmen with fresh beasts, we can arrive in Marrakesha at the evening call.”

Si Hamed rose, a lean brown Arab, tall and taciturn. Shuffling along in horseman's boots and long straight spurs, such as those worn by knights of old, he scanned the animals. Some he pulled by the tails to see if they resisted; for if they stand as firm as trees, it is a sign that they are strong. Others he patted, dragging down their eyelids to see if they were red; for when a horse upon the road begins to flag, his eyelid and the flesh about the eye grows paler, as the heart weakening in its action pumps less blood into the veins. He took the mules' long ears and tweaked them, watching most carefully if it took long for them to go back to their pose; and these formalities gone through without a word, he silently came back, seated himself upon the

carpet's edge, and in a guttural voice ejaculated "Good." The false dawn waning gave place to dark and heavy clouds, obscuring all the heavens, and rendering the roads almost impossible to travel but at a walk, stumbling in the deep ruts left by the feet of countless travellers for generations past. Then by degrees the first grey light of day appeared, the dark black clouds rolled past, and on the trees and shrubs great drops of moisture hung, wetting the long blue Arab cloaks as they brushed swiftly through the bushes on their way. The stars were setting, and the road lay white before them as they struck into the plain, which, like a sea, stretches from just outside the bushy country of the coast, right to the foot of the low hills, which lie between it and the stony steppe, on which Marákesh, girt with its palm trees, stands as in a sea.

As the first rays of sun fell on the company they felt the exultation which buoys up a man who has been riding all the night, and finds himself untired, his horse still fresh, and all the terrors of the darkness blotted out. They shifted in their saddles, rising erect, then settling themselves again pushed on in groups of threes and fours, talking and looking out across the plain.



In half an hour the round white saints' tombs of the Sok Thelatta ibn Nor appeared like mushrooms, and every eye was strained to see whether the tribesmen had arrived. As they rode on, a cloud of dust just rising to the west showed their arrival, and soon the sun shone on the slender single-barrelled guns that Arabs use, holding them upright in their hands, after the way their ancestors held spears.

Out of the dust the tribesmen charged, firing their guns and whirling round like seagulls on the wing. Then pulling up, their horses snorting and passaging, they passed at once from wild excitement to the grave silent attitude which Arabs all affect, just as day changes into night within the tropics, without the twilight intervening to give semitones.

Quickly Menebhi and his band changed horses, and in haste swallowed some food, and then he gave directions to his friends.

"Follow us," he said, "about a rifle-shot behind, and send at once back to the tribe for reinforcements; tell them to hold the bridge across the Tensift at Marákesh when I have crossed it, and have gone into the town."

Once more they took their way across the plain, now heated almost to a furnace by the

sun. With faces covered up by veils and handkerchiefs, they looked like maskers in a play, and as they went the lizards darted through the heated stones, snakes basked, and now and then mysterious pools appeared, which, as the horsemen neared them, took themselves farther off and reappeared, mocking them in their thirst, they seemed so real, just as our life seems real until death comes in and cheats us, ere we can slake our thirst upon the road.

Hours passed, and still the horses jogged, trying to keep up with the mules' swift swimming walk, the heat increased and every stone reflected it, so that it struck both from above and from below and seemed to burn into the bones. The horses sweated and then dried again, the particles of salt glistening upon their skins, and still they pushed along, a cloud of dust blown by the following wind, enveloping and hiding them from sight. At last about the noonday call to prayers, the trees and gardens of the saints' tombs at the oasis of the saint Rahál appeared on the horizon, as it seemed. But the deceiving mirage this time was a friend, for in an hour they reached them, and dismounting, breathed their horses, halting for half an hour beneath some orange trees.

In front the plain stretched on to Zagheríz, which they reached, now fatigued, at three o'clock. Leaving the weaker animals, they set their heads towards the hills of El Gibila, knowing that if they reached them with an hour or two of light, that there were hopes of getting into town before the gates were closed. Changing his horse for a swift-pacing mule, Menebhi led the way, dashing along the stony path, spurring and pulling at his bit, after the Arab style when they ride mules, which answer better to the bit than even to the spur. Right at the summit of the pass, Marákesh burst on them, the Kutubieh like a lighthouse of Islám, springing sheer from the plain like a tall palm tree of brown stone. They raised a shout, knowing that they were well ahead of news, and, without looking at the palm wood or the swift green-grey river running on the stones, dashed down the road to join the level plain. They passed the little saint's house on the hill, and as the sun was sinking, leaving but one short hour of light, reached the long bridge which spans the Tensift and then called a halt. The men arrived in groups, their horses panting and gasping, and Menebhi said :—

“ Hold me the bridge until more men come

from the tribe. Let ten men follow me, and in ten minutes ten more men, and in an interval another lot of ten. When I go in beneath the gate, let a man ride three or four hundred paces back and call a halt, and so on with all the other bands of ten. Be ready, keeping your horses bitted, and if at dawn you do not see me coming through the gate attack the town and seize some notables to serve as hostages."

Settling his clothes and haik, he rode into the palm woods which seethe about Marákesh like a flood. He rode through palms and still more palms, whose trunks, touched by the setting sun, glowed red, and then entering the zone of gardens, paced along between high aloe hedges or brown tápia walls. Crossing the wide maidán, which serves as horse-market, he entered by the lofty horseshoe gate, the guards not seeing in the dusty, road-stained horseman, muffled to the eyes as is the fashion in the land, the powerful minister and his familiar friends. Passing the gate, their horses slipping on the stones, they rode through crowded streets, and open spaces, where the jugglers and the story-tellers gather crowds, right to the palace walls. Dismounting, with a sign he gave his horse to one of his attendants

and saying to the captain of the guard, "The Sultan sent for me and I am here," walked to the courtyard where he knew his master would be found.

As he passed through the various yards and ante-rooms, from the high Kutubieh tower the call to prayer rang out, booming and echoing, and taken up from every minaret. He shivered, knowing his danger, and recognising that the conflict was at hand.

Crossing the last of all the courtyards he came to where the guards keep watch, just where the Sultan sits. The soldiers knew him and respectfully made way, no news of his disgrace having reached them, and as he gave the Peace, his rival dressed in white, and with his face shining with joy, as does the face of him who has found favour with his lord, stood in the gateway. Just for an instant, in the pale dust-stained man, he did not know his foe. But as he would have spoken and have barred the way, the other, throwing back his hood, looked him between the eyes, and said, "Our Lord expects me," and as he spoke he passed into the court. The soldiers closed the gate, and the once joyous and successful rival sank, a white heap of rags, upon a bench.

All night he sat, waiting his fate, and as the morning sun just kissed the mosque towers, flushing them rose-pink, the gateway opened and El-Menebhi, pale with fatigue and dust, but with his eyes alight with victory after the night's debate with his liege lord, appeared before him, as he sat upon the ground. He rose, saluted and stood silent, and the successful rider, throwing his haik across his shoulder, and beckoning for his horse, looked at him stonily and muttered, "Dog!"

## AN EMIR

ONLY two years ago it was a waste of sand, which from the edge of a high cliff looked out across the straits at Spain, that submerged fraction of the Eastern world. On it dogs, yellow and as thin as jackals, played. When it was dark they howled, making night hideous or melodious, according as the listener's ears were tuned to the roar of cities or to the silence of the East. Ragweed and mignonette, and now and then a bur and now and then a gentian struggled from the sand, their stalks grown woody with the drought. Dead dogs and cats strewed it abundantly, with offal of all kinds, and on the scanty grass an ass or two fed without appetite, resigned to fate.

At times some Arabs from the interior camped upon it, their bell-shaped tents sewn with squat bottles of blue cloth springing like mushrooms from the sand, their mules and horses standing listless in the sun, stamping at flies or neighing shrilly when they were fed at

night. Their owners wandered on the cliff looking across toward "El-Andalus," pondering, perchance, upon the black, the incomprehensible, the element on which Allah has given scant dominion to his faithful, and of which Musa, he who conquered Spain and died in far Damascus, poor and a prisoner, said, "It is a thing the mind of none can compass, vast and ungovernable; fools ride it to their ruin in their hollow ships. . . . Such is the sea, no man hath bridled it."

Perhaps the campers wondered why the people of the faith, those who alone can properly pronounce the letter *dod*, did not again attempt the conquest of the land which once they ruled, or perhaps their thoughts but ran upon the price of eggs in Tángier, or in the sok of Jabaltár.

Jews and more Jews, the women handsome, but graceless as must be all condemned for centuries to persecution, and the men more Spanish than the Spaniards in their faces, but much more European in their minds, lived in long rows of pink or sky-blue houses, upon every side. The little plain called the Marshán, on which in Carolean times battles were fought against the Moors, under the chief the English



called Lord Gáylan, spread out between the cliffs above the sea and those which run down to the River of the Jews. Just at the end a Moorish cemetery, a field of stones, cut into little paths on every side, in which the feet of all the passers-by for centuries had left deep ruts, seemed to connect the living and the dead, in the familiar way of Africa, where no God's acre, railed and cut off from all the world, forms both a barrier against the quick, and yet a link with those who sleep beneath the grass.

The waste of sand, the cemetery, the howling dogs, and all the features of the life of Tángier, which have endured since first Ibn-Batúta left its walls to set forth on his travels, seemed likely to go on for ever, as changeless as the tide-rip which foams and billows in the middle of the Straits.

Then on a day a gang of builders suddenly appeared, Arabs with sacking tied about their loins, talking and shouting, and falling over one another in their zeal to do as little as was possible. A Spanish foreman, solemn and olive-coloured (a Moor in trousers and a cap), speaking a jargon between Andalúz and Arabic, and half incomprehensible to all his workmen,

walked about, looking intensely grave, and now and then cursing his men for dogs of infidels.

A Jew, thin, lithe and eager, acted the part of clerk of works, and in a month or two walls and more walls of courtyards, the scheme of every Moorish house, rose as by magic from the sand. The noise and the confusion of the men would have shamed Babel easily, and yet the work went on, went on by force of human strength and sweat, men raising stone by pulleys, in which palmetto ropes creaked noisily, whilst donkeys waited patiently with lime.

So did they build the Pyramids, the temples at Palenqué, and thus did the Alhambra rise out of the rocks which crown the gorge above the courses of the Darro and Geníl. Grave, bearded, white-clad men, holding each other's hands, as children do in lands where custom sets a gulf unbridgable betwixt the actions of the old and young, came and sat down on heaps of stones and criticized. They gave their reasons solemnly, and with much calling upon God, raising their hands with a slow motion from the wrist, and turning up their palms towards their auditors, who listened to them silently with now and then a pious phrase, which whistled through the larynx as the wind

whistles through the trees. Some held the employment of the Christian would bring bad luck, whilst others gave as their opinion that the infidel was given might by God over the steam and electricity, and it was right to profit by his lore, as Allah, for wise reasons of his own, allowed him greatly to enjoy the earth, reserving to himself the power, the world's play done, to cast him into Tophet, where he should wither for a thousand years.

Men swarmed like ants about the walls, chattering like parrots in a field of maize, and mules and donkeys carrying bricks and lime went to and fro, men urging them with blows and shouting curses on their mothers, all which they took unmoved and uncomplaining, their round black eyes looking amazed and philosophically upon their fellow-slaves who ran beside them yelling in their ears.

Word came from Suez or Port Said that soon the owner of the place might be expected, and that all work be finished by a certain day, on which he with his women and his suite would be in Tángier, and would take possession of the house. Painters and decorators, working with a will, soon gave the interior a habitable air, glazing the windows with parti-coloured

glass, and painting dados of great stripes of blue picked out with orange, and finishing pink window-frames with green, a scheme of colour which to a Western eye seems crude, but which in Africa the light tones down and softens as in a garden flowers are blended by the sun into a harmony.

Then, all desisted from their work, and the great house stood silent in the sun, as some huge palace in the realms of the "Arabian Nights" called up by genii, springs in a night, and perhaps vanishes away as speedily, into the sand from which it rose. Though built so hastily, it yet looked solid, the long white walls without a window, giving it an air as of a fortress, which the great gate did not belie though plated with sheet tin.

The master landed at the port, his baggage packed in carpets and in great wooden cases, filling a lighter to the water's edge, and he himself, dressed all in fleecy white, was welcomed by his friends. He got upon his mule, settled his clothes, and followed by a friend from Mecca, rode slowly through the town. Women and eunuchs followed, and the whole train emerging from the walls, clattered and slithered up the slippery street paved with rough cobble

stones, and stood before the house. Cushions were brought and, sitting down, the owner's part was done, for he sat drinking tea and opening letters, handing them to his secretary to read and comment on, as if he had already lived a lifetime in the house new risen from the sand. His household silently fell into its accustomed round. A throng of wild retainers lounged about the door, which opened on a narrow street, giving no inkling of the splendour of the place. Horses and mules were hobbled in the grounds, and tents were pitched in corners, in which mysterious men dozed on their saddles, or sat drinking tea, and at which messengers arrived bearing exaggerated news about the doings of the French upon the frontier, the fights between the tribes, and of the struggles of the various European Powers for the predominance at Fez.

The owner having been a minister of state, one of those men who in the East are sure to sow the seeds of jealousy in sovereigns' minds by standing out too high above the crowd, and who had fallen into disgrace, losing most of his property, and running in danger of his life, looked on his palace as a sort of exile, not that he, as an Arab, probably was more attached to

one place than another, but as a banishment from power, which so appeals to all men of his race, that Diocletian, the one philosopher in practice, who has sat upon a throne, to them would be a madman, and his retirement, the wisest action history has set down of any ruler in the world, incomprehensible. Their subtle, quick and yet material minds rise to few flights of fancy. That which exists, for them is absolute, and Allah sent his sun, his rain, his power or poverty for men to bear, enjoy or profit by, but not to criticize.

So in his garden, which had been made as quickly as the house, and which his taste had set with beds of Indian corn and vegetables, after the fashion of his race, that holds all gardens should be used for profit, and flowers as incidental, and not necessities as in the West, he passed the portion of an Oriental's life that Westerns ever see. Dressed all in spotless white, eager and lithe, and never still an instant when upon his feet, he roamed about much as a tiger roams about its cage. At times he sat, quiet and impassible, as is a joss upon its shrine, in one of those small narrow rooms the Moors construct in which to see their friends who cannot pass into the

house. Beside him sat his secretary, a young black-bearded Arab doctor of the law, who had passed years in Mecca and at Cairo, and yet had learned no word of any tongue but Arabic. Quick and intelligent, almost vivacious in his speech, his manners courteous, and his smile as ready to break out as sun in April, and to illumine all his face with seeming kindness, some thought he was a fanatic at heart, others that in the holy city of the Haj, seeing the mystery too near, he had become indifferent, even a sceptic, as happens now and then to ardent Christians who have lived long in Rome, and become too familiar with their faith. But, if his thoughts were difficult to fathom, as no doubt the thoughts of Europeans, ever a mystery to Easterns, were to him, they were as clear as crystal beside those of the accomplished ex-minister, now fallen from his high estate, to whom the house belonged.

Jews, Moors and Europeans and an occasional out-at-elbows Turk, all thronged his doors, most of them anxious for assistance of some kind. To some he gave hard cash, to others promises, but always courteously, so that none said of him as says the adage, "The man has neither charity nor a kind word to give."

But, on the other hand, the richer Europeans, in want of lions (which had long ago retired into the Atlas Mountains beyond Fez), had hailed with acclamation his advent in their midst.

No party was complete without him, and as the dancers whirled about, with arms and shoulders bare, he sat and possibly discreetly wondered at the show.

Silent and bored, but smiling, he sat at parties, timid but haughty, for no one better than an Arab knows all the gradations of society, or is so quick to take offence at courtesies omitted, or any social sin committed by his host. Women, young, beautiful and half-undressed, stood by his side, their petticoats just mingling with his flowing robes, and he who from his youth had never looked a woman in the face, except she was his sister or his wife, stood unconcerned, although his blood, no doubt, ran boiling through his veins. Still he smiled on, a smile so enigmatical that even diplomats who put him down as a hot-headed Arab chief, must surely now and then have wondered what he thought.

The hospitalities that he received from German, English, and from French alike, he



paid back amply in his new palace, in which the plaster and the paint were hardly dry, and where the flowers in the garden seemed to have been planted all in bloom, and yet which, by the virtue of the climate and the custom of the land which makes it natural to let a house decay for want of necessary care, then build another by the side of it, neither seemed old nor yet conspicuously new.

Playing at tennis with young ladies in his court, which, painted green to mitigate the glare, looked out upon the sea, he still looked dignified. Walking about the open yards, which serve in Arab houses as reception-rooms, after a dinner party, and no doubt conscious that a dozen curious eyes of carefully veiled women watched from upper windows, envying or perhaps despising the greater opportunities their European sisters had, he looked as must have looked the Emirs of Granada, when they entertained a batch of Christian knights and ladies, in the last bulwark of Islám, in Spain.

So, in the house which he had built, as it were by chance, and in the garden looking on the sea, he passed his days, for the most part, after the fashion of his fathers, half of his life shut from the world behind a curtain, from

which at times came voices in dispute and sometimes songs, harsh and high pitched, but haunting as is a cricket's pæan to the sun, heard in a noonday halt beneath the trees. Sometimes he rode abroad, erect and swaying on his horse, his long white draperies afloat, with his eyes fixed upon the distance, after the manner of his ancestors who, as they rode across the sands, looked out for enemies. His, though concealed, are just as imminent, and he awaits them still, uncomprehended and incomprehensible, courteous and cruel, rash and yet diplomatic, lounging the hours away upon the cliff, from which he sees the land where his race flourished, and from which, constrained by circumstance or fate, it sank again into the sands.

## FATE

IN a long corridor of an old Georgian house, lit by a skylight and by a window over the hall door, there hung a piece of needlework in a dark rosewood frame. In silk, some lady of the family had worked a landscape setting forth the district and the house in which the picture hung. It stood four square and looked out on the east, across the moss which once had been a sea. On either side of the great strath ran lines of hills, one rough and heather-clad, as when just at their feet the Romans were rolled back, the other smooth and green, and sloping off towards the south. The moss itself was brown and on its face the shadows came and went, chasing each other as the hours pursue eternity, leaving no trace where they had passed.

Trees stood about the house and in the pictured needlework; in one case stiff and formal, looking like ineffectual monuments of grief in cemeteries, and in the other whispering in the wind, labouring and groaning

in the storm, and in the sunshine all alive with bees.

The careful needlewoman had displayed each stone and window in the house ; colouring those black which had been closed during the operation of the window tax ; and had dwelt lovingly on walls and pediments. The range of hills under her magnifying steel had changed to mountains, and a small lake had come into existence supplied with water from the fountains of her brain. Right carefully she had devised the cedars, with the beech avenue, the sycamores, the weeping yew, and the stiff terrace upon which the house was set, whilst every post in all the fences was portrayed both with elaborate stitching and with circumstance.

Just as much inkling of perspective was employed as to make all unnatural, and yet on looking at it, you felt it had been done with tenderness, and the contriver must have put her soul into the task.

Such artless works sometimes more nearly touch the heart than the most airy flights of genius, when the place represented has been dear to the beholder and the artist ; for places, unlike men, can never vary, and time itself breeds no satiety of love.

The faint, fresh smell of fir trees in the wet, that scent of dampness rising from the moss and the perfume of bracken, sweet and sharp, must have been present always to the worker as she sat sewing at her window-seat, whilst gazing at the rain.

Time does not mellow needlework as it does pictures, yet still it gives it interest, and as the colours fade and ends of silk grow rough, it seems a soul is born in them which speaks to us out of its nothingness, bringing us somehow nearer to the dead.

So it hung on, getting a little yellower, more flyblown, and with the varnish scaling from the rosewood frame and the gold falling off in particles from the interior rim, as winter damp and summer sun succeeded year by year in the long corridor of the old Georgian house. Birds sat upon it now and then, and bats occasionally hid themselves between it and the wall, and darted out again as fearlessly as if the lonely passage had been an alley in a wood. Nothing appeared less likely than that a tragedy should be unrolled with it as background, or as the world, in which after the fashion of the greater world outside its

frame, birth, life, and death should pass all unperceived.

Life was serene as usual in the corridor, whilst the dust gathered on the picture-frames and clung upon the looking-glasses as frost clings on a cabbage leaf in the late autumn after a cold night. The house itself, buried in woods, woods and more woods, stood lonely, and in the avenues guttered and channelled by the winter rains, the grass grew rank. The terraces were pitted here and there with holes made by the rabbits in their play, who left a little heap of sand outside them, to which occasionally clung brown silky fur.

The roedeer, venturing from the copses, strayed in the summer nights and belled close to the windows; and the soft flying owls wafted from tree to tree like kites, or hooted litanies from the tall larches, whilst from the woods and mosses rose the faint noises which at night wake recollections of the time when men and animals perchance all spoke one tongue.

The charm of desolation had descended on the place, and the rare lights and few inhabitants seemed to be lost in nature, which invaded them, swallowing them in her amplitude as the stray vegetation swallows up a church

deserted by the Jesuits out on the Chaco or in Paraguay. Gnomons had fallen from sundials, and the stone slabs of terrace steps yawned open : from some of them sprang ferns, whilst on the coping of the walls the moss grew tenderly. The ponds were half grown up with flags and bulrushes. Great banks of sand and mud stretched into them, brought by the burns in winter, and on them feathers stuck, looking like snowflakes and fluttering in the wind. All was so quiet that the mast falling from the beech sounded like raindrops pattering upon ice or on a window-pane.

Nothing disturbed the quiet of the place, which slowly seemed to fall to ruins and become more beautiful each day. Then, on a summer morning when the swallows darted through the trees, hawking at flies, and on the grass the squirrels ventured timidly to play, springing upon the overhanging boughs at the first sudden noise, a bubble seemed to swell below the glass and force it outwards at the corner of the frame. It grew mysterious and white, next turned a rusty brown, then was forgotten as the days slipped past, each one so like the other that the flight of time was imperceptible, darkness succeeding light as stealthily as the owls floated

through the wood, lighting like thistle-down on the elastic branches of the trees.

Weeks passed and still the mystery was unsolved, only beneath the envelope a fluttering motion now and then was seen, as if a spirit prisoned in its cell stirred faintly, struggling to free itself from matter and to escape into the sky. But no one marked it much, for tragedies may be enacted at one's elbow, and none the wiser; for indeed, most tragedies seem comic to the looker-on, who does not comprehend the motive, and takes the sufferer for a mere ill-bred person, who might have lived and died, just like the rest of us, had he had common sense.

So the bees hung about the lime trees, making their music in the flowers, the cedars' branches swayed like windmills' sails, and in the thickest of the woods the capercailzie crowed, flapping their wings with a strange hollow sound which echoed through the trees, like negro tomtoms by night up some mosquito-haunted river on the Coast, or like the mournful drum which Bernal Diaz heard during the siege of the great temple of Tenochtitlán.

Then, on a morning in late June, when the soft air just curled the rising mist from off the



moss into tall pillars such as rise in a simoom, one who had looked by chance at the old needlework in passing, saw that the tragedy had taken place.

The temple's veil was rent, and fallen asunder, and underneath the glass a brown and fluffy moth had come into the world, been born, had stirred, just fluttered and had died, seeing the air it could not fly in, feeling the life within it, which fate that laughs at all things, moths and men alike, said it should never taste.

To wish it peace, it who had not known trouble, were in vain, and for repose, its wings had never fluttered in the air. Care, sorrow, love, hate, pain, revenge, and still less avarice, or ambition by which the fool and not the noble falls, it should know none of, and probably would not have felt in its brief joyous life.

But to be cabined in a cage of glass, to suffer the *peine forte et dure* of death by pressing, for no committed crime, poor, fluttering fairy round the lamp of life, 'twas hard. How brief your pleasures and how innocent, merely to play about the corridors of the old melancholy house to prove your wings, and then to soar into some fir tree on the lawn, equipped at once with all the lore inherited from those your

ancestors in Eden, who flitted through the cypresses of that fair garden on the Tigris, and then after a day or two, at most a month, to love, to rove at night amongst the trees, to fall at the first frost or heavy shower, and lie amongst the needles of the pines without a single crime upon your conscience, tender as your wings, this would have been your fate.

Alas, poor fellow, would-be flutterer in the realms of a hard world, perhaps the fate presiding at your birth who with her unkind shears cut off your destiny, was kind. Who knows? You might have come to ruin or mishap, e'en you who surely had no unkind thought in your minute and microscopic brain.

Circling about at night, thinking no evil, after the fashion of your clan, a candle light which to your complex eyes might have appeared a sun, vast, round, and vivifying, might have attracted you and left you writhing agonized and maimed, a prey to children who in their rage for self-improvement, or from the cruelty which we who have no wings bear in our blood as the true sign of the great curse our common Maker set upon us at the Fall, might have transfixed you with a pin.

Perils we know not of and which have never

entered our dull brains, so ill attuned to all the mysteries of your world, may have awaited you. Some pestilence which no physician of our kind has diagnosed might have attacked and struck you blind, crippling your flight or rendering you unsightly to the companions of your merry little world. This might have been, or the fell spider with his web of fated filaments entangled your soft wings and drawn you struggling to his den, cut off your life and fed upon your flesh, for these are dangers even we who know so little of your lives can comprehend. From these your fate has freed you, making you equal to great Cæsar, Hannibal, to Alexander, both to the greatest and the least of all mankind, by the mere fact that you have lived.

Rail not at fate, poor iridescent moth, although the hues upon your wings were meant to shine at twilight as you flickered through the trees with just as fair a lustre as the most gorgeous butterfly who hovers in the sun on the Tijuca's slopes can ever boast. Do not repine, although no snowflake would have floated from the sky more delicately than the unfollowable pulsations of your wings would have conveyed you through the twilight air in your brief

honeymoon with life. You will not know the joy of liberty, tender and innocent in its conception, as moths alone conceive it, of all created things. Let no cursed man of science with his dog Latin and apocalyptic Greek dispel my ignorance, telling me that the family of moths is as rapacious as the vulture or the crow. I'll not believe it, but will mourn thy fate, condemned to see for a brief moment all the beauties of the light, never to flit at evening in the dark recesses of the trees. Poor pilgrim to a world unworthy of your innocence, who lived and died so quickly, surely you solved at once the mysteries which we live for a lifetime and still never grasp. My fellow-sufferer by fate, you, who left instantly the world in which we tarry longer instants, with as scant comprehension of our lives perhaps as you, do not forget us prisoned in our glass; but in the limbo where you flutter now, think that a fellow-moth remembers you, just as you lived and died, with your soft body, iridescent wings, and sharp antennæ.

## HA TIL MI TULIADH

ALL was unchanged, and Nature cared not, being occupied with sun and moon and stars, the tides, the mists, the dew, rain, snow, the fall and reproduction of the leaf, and the great mysteries, the cause of which evades and always has evaded man. She smiled, as she does sometimes at a funeral, sending a glimpse of sun upon a coffin-plate, so that the cold-nipped mourners read the age of the deceased whilst they stand peering down into the grave, as in a blaze of light.

All was unchanged.

The two tall lime trees towered above the rough field-gate contrived of poles running through horseshoes wedged into their trunks.

The leaves just swept the roof, and in the evening air they seemed to sigh for the departed, who for so many years had watched them green in April bursting into life, and glorious in autumn as they fell carpeting the road, and piled upon the level doorstep with its

concentric pattern drawn in chalk; the rush-thatched byre, upon whose roof grew fumitory and corydalis, looked just as it had looked for forty years, and the low door flanked by great tufts of golden-rod and of angelica, and painted blue, was shut for ever on its late owners and on me. Through it, from earliest childhood, as I passed, I led my ponies, tying them in the dark beside the cow to the tall uprights which in Highland cowsheds serve for stalls.

Two sisters, almost the last survivors of an ancient race, had lived for years in the old cottage by the reedy lake. Descendants of the retainer of a feudal chief, their ancestors had been hereditary ferrymen, for, in the days of old, caste, now confined to India and the East, was spread throughout the world.

In what rough coracle or boat their remote ancestors had ferried over to the island, men dressed in skins, no one can say, for from the dawn of history in Menteith marauding clansmen, coming with a creagh from the laigh, had been rowed over to the castle in the isle by some one of their race.

In the deep bay, rush-locked and clear, they or their father had constructed a rude pier of stones and wattles, to which a boat was tied,

the paint all sun-cracked, and with an inch or two of water in the well.

So in the days gone by, in houses occupied by gentlemen whose pedigrees were longer than their purse, an antiquated carriage, used as a roosting-place by hens, slowly decayed in some gaunt coach-house, given up to damp.

Carriage and boat were evidence of better times, a link with days of glory long departed, drawing a smile or tear, according to the point from which the man who saw them looked upon the world.

So in the cottage the two sisters lived ; relics of days when men were civil in their speech, had time and did not spare it in its use. They never travelled far, but, for all that, they knew the world in which they lived themselves in all its niceties. Constrained by poverty to work, the sisters yet appeared two ladies in distress, not fallen in fortunes, though their Potosí was but the little croft and garden with "its hantle of sour plumbtrees," but, so to speak, having suffered wrong from Nature, which had not placed them free from all necessities at birth. Not that they lacked advancement either, for in their heart of hearts they held themselves the equals of the highest in the land ; a tacit

claim which all admitted, but their equals, in the old-fashioned district where they lived. Raw-boned and rather hard of feature, the eldest had the soft Highland voice and manner, which somehow seems not to belong to modern life, and places the possessor of them in a world outside the present age. The younger, gentle and delicate, had never married, must have been pretty in her youth, and lived her life subordinated to her sister, admiring her, and in her turn being admired and cherished by her in a half-tender and half-peremptory way.

Their father was an ancient Celt who formed a link with olden times, being compounded of quite different essences and stronger simples than men of latter days. Born as he was, just where the Highlands and the Lowlands touch, he had amalgamated much of the characteristics of the two. His manners were all Highland, his knowledge of the world partly his own and partly that of the Low Country, as we style the realm of bogs and marshy fields that swells and billows like a sea up to the lumpy range of tawny hills that cuts them from the north, and, till the days of railways, formed a bar as strong and as insuperable as is a navigable river, or



indeed the sea. Short, and in later years bent almost double, but to the last alert upon his legs, time and the rain, which when it ceases for a fortnight is the theme of prayers in church, had turned him a light fern colour, and his clothes, and hair—originally grey (for no one living could remember when his head was brown)—had weathered to a lichen-looking green, and his blue twinkling eyes, not bleared with age, could, as he said himself, “discern a gentleman almost a mile away.” Gentry and gentlemen, by which he understood those of old family, for money could not make, nor the want of it mar, in his opinion, were the chief objects of his creed.

“The Queen can mak’ a duke, she canna’ mak’ Lochiel,” he would observe with pride, not that the limitation of the royal power rejoiced him, for he held, as do Mohammedans, that he who reigned did so by right divine, but it seemed to him evident, or else the prayer for those “set over us and under Him” had been of no account.

Withal he was himself a gentleman, if natural good-breeding makes one, conjoined with courtesy in speech. Upon a visit, when he had showed you round his croft, with what

an air he used to offer you fruit in a cabbage leaf, saying, "Will ye tak' berries, laird," or "leddy," as the case might be, thus exercising hospitality in its best sense, by giving what he had without false shame or with excuses for his poverty. One ate them, listening all the time to local lore, distorted through the vision of his years, and rendered picturesque partly by want of education and partly by the way he touched his subject, embroidering and adorning it with sidelights of his own, just as an artist draws from what he sees in his own brain, and neither copies nor extenuates his theme.

Seated upon the gunwale of his boat, and talking volubly in the soft Highland accent, which makes you think that you knew Gaelic once upon a time, the landscape all unchanged, the scrubby oak copse straggling up the hill, the bracken yellowing in the autumn breeze, and leaves of sycamores, mottled and black, like trout in moorland burns, all falling softly round about, whilst the white mist crept up and hung the castle and the chapel in the air, making the great stag-headed chestnuts in the Isle of Rest look like gigantic antlers thrown against the sky, the things and men of which he spoke became alive again and the long,

broken link with the old world was welded into shape. You heard unmoved, and as a thing quite natural, and which it seemed had happened to yourself, how he had walked to Eglinton to see the tournament, taking three days to do it, in the rain; had slept beneath the trees, had seen it all, especially the Emperor of the French, "Napoleon Third, ye ken," the Queen of Beauty carried through the mud, and then tramped back again.

Who, in these days of education and of common sense, made manifest and plain by copy-book, would do the like, out of pure love of sport, lightness of heart, or the sheer devilment of youth?

All the old legends of the Borderland he knew; with much about Rob Roy, who as he used to say was "better in a tuilzie than a fight, for all his skill o' fence, and they long arms o' his, ye mind, he could untie the garters frae his hose without a stoop or hogging up his back." He talked about the man just as he were alive, so naturally and without effort, having heard all he told you from his grandfather, that it would not have startled you on looking round to see Red Robert in the flesh come trotting down the hill, his target at

his back, and his long Spanish "culbeir" in his hand, humming a waulking song or whistling a strathspéy.

All the old legends of the district and his lore of times gone by he left his daughters, which, working in their minds and coming to the surface in their speech, stranded them lonely in the world, without a fellow, just as a glacier-carried boulder in a glen must feel deserted in the tall heather where it lies, far from the hills and stones.

The younger sister first departed, going on before to tell their father that the world was changed, and that no place was left for them or theirs, and that the osprey built no more in the old chestnuts which the monks had planted round the grey priory in the isle, and that the trees themselves were growing balder and more sere. The elder lingered on alone, brisk but alert, driving her cow down to the mossy "park," and stepping east to church when it was fine, not following the road, but going through the fields (though it took longer by them), perhaps from the hereditary Highland habit of avoiding stones in days when every man made his own brogues at home. In summer time she took into her house artists

and fishermen, and those whom the fine weather drives into the country for a time, and who lounge through their time smoking and bored, but conscious it is right to do as others do, and therefore satisfied. They thought her odd, and she esteemed them common, but "awfa' clever folk, ye ken, ane o' them painted me a bit picture o' ma sister from a fotygraph, ane o' they dagyriotypes, ye mind them, done on glass, which I have by me since it was ta'en back about sixty-three, the time o' yon review at Paisla', the verra image o' her, laird, I'm tellin' ye." The effort of the limner's art (to which even a "dagyriotype" on glass was preferable) hung in her little parlour, resplendent with megilp, shining with poppy oil, and setting forth the patient with a grin upon her face, and with the clothes in fashion forty years ago, themselves not beautiful, rendered ridiculous by newness, just as a play of the same time appears to us absurd, not that our own are better, but because folly is a changing quantity and different in degree.

Our friendship, fast but intermittent, lasted many years, and the byre door through which my ponies used to pass became too small to lead my horse through, and so we generally

talked outside the house, not that we said much, for she was growing deaf, and I knew all her stories years ago, but it pleased both of us, and when I mounted and rode off she used to stand, holding her hand above her eyes, after the fashion of a sailor on a pier, looking out seaward, even when not a sail is on the sea.

Her death was in the olden style, after the fashion she had lived; so to speak, not premeditated, but natural, just as a tree dies at the top, decaying downwards, till it is gone almost before those who have known it all their lives are well aware of its decease. The neighbours told me, for I was absent in that region which folks in Menteith call "up about England," that she was "travellin'" from church, felt ill upon arriving at her house, took to her bed, and "sleepit bonnily awa'" upon the following day. A man, that is a man who feels the ancient Highland spirit in his blood, would like to die with his boots on, but for a woman this was the nearest thing to sudden death, and quite became the last of an old violent race of men.

In the old churchyard by the lake, amongst the Grahams and the Macgregors, some of

whom have swords upon their headstones, for all their trade-mark and memorial of their lives, she sleeps. With pride of race and Scottish thoughtfulness she left sufficient to erect a stone, in which is cut her name, her sister's, that of her father, and those of many of her clan. It stands in the wet grass, close to the wall of the kirkyard, a sort of landmark in the history of Menteith, showing a page turned down; a page on which but few could read, even before the book was shut for the last time. To bid her sleep in peace is but a work of supererogation, after full eighty years of life. Those who remain tossing and turning upon life's uneasy pillow stand more in need of such a wish.

So I "stepped west," and, coming to the Highland cottage by the lake, found the door shut, the hearthstone cold, the garden eaten up with weeds, the flauchtered feals upon the cowhouse roof fallen from the poles, and the old boat, hauled up upon the beach, paintless and blistering in the sun. No cow fed in the little rushy park, even the withies which had once confined the gate were burst and swinging in the wind. The door was shut, shut against me, and shut upon the last of my

old friends ; so, sitting down upon the step, on which no longer was a pattern laid in chalk, I smoked and meditated, seeing a long procession pass upon the road, all riding ponies which grew larger towards the end, until a man upon a horse brought up the rear. They stopped before the house, which seemed to have turned newer, and in which a fire of peats burned brightly on the hearth. Then, from the door . . . but . . . I will return no more (*Ha til mi tuliadh*) ; he who waits at the ferry long enough will get across some time.



## MISS CHRISTIAN JEAN

Two pictures hang upon my study wall, faded and woolly, but well stippled up, the outlines of the hills just indicated with a fine reed pen, showing the water, coloured saffron, deepening to pink in the deep shadows of the lake. Although one picture is a sunset and the other done as it would seem at sunrise, they show a country which even yet is undefiled by any human step.

So accurately is the dark brown tree set in position on the border of the fleecy lake, one feels an artist, superior to mere nature, has been about the task. The castle on the mountain top, in one of the two masterpieces, is at the bottom of the hill in its compeer, and in the two a clear blue sky throws a deep shadow over the unruffled water, on which float boats with tall white sails, progressing without wind.

Still, with their frames, which are but fricassees of gingerbread well gilt, to me they

say a something all the art of all the masters leaves unsaid.

A masterpiece speaks of imagination in its maker; but those pale blue-grey hills and salmon-coloured pinkish lakes, castles which never could have been inhabited, boats sailing in a calm, and trees that seem to rustle without breeze, set me reflecting upon things gone by, and upon places of which I once was part, places which still ungratefully live on, whilst that of me which lived in them is dead.

A long low Georgian room, in which the pictures hung, with its high mantelpiece, its smell of damp and Indian curiosities, and window looking out on the sunk garden underneath the terraces, the sides of which were honeycombed by rabbits, rises in my view, making me wonder in what substance of the body or the mind they have been stamped.

How few such rooms remain, and how few houses such as that, to which the dark and dampish chamber, with its three outside walls, and deep-cut mouldings on the windows and the doors, was library. We called it "book-room," in the Scottish way, although the books were few and mostly had belonged to a dead uncle who had bought them all in India, and

on their yellowing leaves were stains of insects from the East, and now and then a grass or flower from Hyderabad or Kolapur (as pencilled notes upon the margin said), transported children to a land so gorgeous that the like of it was never seen on earth. These books were all well chosen, and such as men read fifty years ago — Macaulay's Essays, with the Penny Cyclopædia, Hume, Smollett, Captain Cook, The Life of Dost Mohammed, Elphinstone's Cabul Mission, with Burckhardt's Travels, enthralling Mungo Park, and others of the kind that at hill stations in the rains, or in the plains during the summer, must have passed many an hour of boredom and of heat away for their dead purchaser. The rest were books of heraldry and matters of the kind, together with a set of Lever and of Dickens, with plates by Cruikshank or by Hablot Brown. One in particular set forth a man upon a horse, with a red fluttering cloak streaming out in the wind, galloping in the midst of buffaloes with a long knife between his teeth. But books and furniture and Indian curiosities, with the high Adams chimney-piece and portraits of the favourite hounds and horses of three generations, were, as it were,

keyed up to the two water-colours, one of which hung up above a cabinet sunk far into the wall and glazed, the other over a low double door, deep as an embrasure.

All through the house the smell of damp, of kingwood furniture, and roses dried in bowls, blended and formed a scent which I shall smell as long as life endures. This may, of course, have been mere fancy; but often in old houses some picture or some piece of furniture appears to give the keynote to the rest. But it seemed evident to me that, in some strange mysterious way, the pictures, outstanding in their badness, had stamped themselves upon the house more than the Reynoldses and Raeburns on the walls, though they were pictures of my ancestors, and the two water-colours represented no known landscape upon earth. They entered into my ideas so strongly (though they were unobtrusive in themselves) that, looking from the window-seat in the deep bay of the sunk window in the dining-room, across the terraces, over the sea of laurels, beyond the rushy "parks," and out upon the moss and the low lumpy hills that ran down to the distant lake, almost divided into two by a peninsula set with dark pine trees and with

planes, the landscape seemed unfinished and lacking interest without the castles and the chrome-laden skies of the twin masterpieces.

It may be, too, that the unnatural landscape caused me to form unnatural views of life, finding things interesting and people worthy of remark whom others found quite commonplace, merely upon their own account, and not from the surroundings of their lives. So every one connected with the house of the two works of art became mixed up somehow with them in a mysterious way, as well as things inanimate and trees, the vegetation and the white mist which half the year hung over moss and woods, shrouding the hills and everything in its unearthly folds, making them strange and half unreal, as is a landscape in a dream.

Perhaps the fact that the house stood just at the point where Lowlands end and the great jumble of the Highland hills begins, and that the people were compounded of both simples, Saxon and Celtic mixed in equal parts, gave them and all the place an interest such as clings to borderlands the whole world over, for even forty years ago one talked of "up above the pass" as of a land distinct from where we lived. Down from those regions

wandered men speaking a strange tongue, shaggy, and smelling of a mixture of raw wool and peat smoke, whose dogs obeyed them in a way in which no dog of any man quite civilized, broken to railways and refreshment-rooms, obeys his master's call. The bond of union may have been that both slept out in the wet dew, huddling together in the morning round the fire for warmth, or something else, the half-possession of some sense that we have lost, by means of which, all unknown to themselves, the drover and his dog communicated. Communion, very likely, is the word, the old communion of all living things, the lost connection between man and all the other animals, which modern life destroys.

But, be that as it may, the men and dogs seemed natives, and we who lived amongst the mosses and the hills seemed strangers, by lack of something or by excess of something else, according to your view.

The herds of ponies that the men drove before them on the road fell naturally into the scheme of nature; sorrels and yellow chestnuts, creams and duns, they blended with the scrubby woods and made no blot upon the shaggy hills. Instinctively they took the long-forgotten fords,

crossing below the bridges, and standing knee-deep in the stream, the water dripping from their ropy tails and burdock-knotted manes. The herds of kyloes too have gone, which looked like animals of some race older than our own. The men who drove them, with their rough clothes of coarse grey wool, their hazel crooks, and plaids about their shoulders, whether the wind blew keenly or midges teased in August, all have disappeared. Their little camps upon the selvedge of the roads are all forgotten, although I know them still, by the bright grass that grows upon the ashes of the fires. Or have they gone, and are the hills brown, lumpy, heather-clad, and jewelled after rain by myriad streams, merely illusions; and is it really that I myself have gone, and they live on, deep down in the recesses of some fairy hill of which I am not free?

Men, too, like my friend Wallace of Gartchorrachan, have disappeared, and I am not quite sure if we should bless the Lord on that account. All through Menteith, and right "across the hill" as far as Callander and Doune, he was well known, and always styled Laird Wallace, for though our custom is to call men by the title of their lands, thus

making them *adscripti glebæ* to the very soul, the word Gartchorrachan stuck in our throats, although we readily twist and distort the Gaelic place-names in our talk just as the Spaniards mutilate the Arab words, smoothing their corners and their angles out in the strong current of their speech.

Dressed in grey tweed with bits of buckskin let into the shoulders of his coat, for no one ever saw him leave his house without a gun, he was about the age that farmers in the north seem to be born at—that is, for years he had been grey, but yet was vigorous, wore spectacles, and his thick curly hair was matted like the wool upon a ram, whilst from his ears and nostrils grew thick tufts of bristles, just as a growth of twigs springs from the trunk of an old oak tree, where it has got a wound.

His house was like himself, old, grey, and rambling, and smelt of gun oil, beeswax, and of camphor, for he was versed in entomology, and always had a case of specimens, at which he laboured with a glass stuck in his eye, reminding me of Cyclops or of Polyphemus, or of an ogre in a story-book. Botany and conchology and generally those sciences which when pursued without a method soon became



trifling and a pastime, were his joys, and he had cabinets in which the specimens reposed under a heavy coat of dust, but duly ticketed each with its Latin name.

He spoke good English as a general rule, and when unmoved, as was the custom with the people of his class and upbringing, but often used broad Scotch, which he employed after the fashion of a shield against the world, half in a joking way and half against the sin of self-revelment which we shun as the plague, passing our lives like pebbles in a brook, which rub against each other for an age, and yet remain apart.

In early life he had contracted what he called a "local liassong," the fruit of which had been a daughter whom he had educated, and who lived with him, half as his daughter, half as housekeeper. Her father loved her critically, and when she not infrequently swept china on the floor as she passed through the drawing-room (just as a tapir walks about a wood, breaking down all the saplings in its path), he would screw up one eye, and looking at her say, "That's what you get from breeding from a cart-mare, the filly's sure to throw back to the dam."

Withal he was a gentleman, having been in the army and travelled in his youth, but had not got much more by his experience than the raw youth of whom his father said, "Aye, Willie's been to Rome and back again, and a' he's learnt is but to cast his sark aince every day." But still he was a kindly man, the prey of any one who had a specious story, the providence of all lame horses and of dogs quite useless for any kind of sport, all which he bought at prices far above the value of the most favoured members of their race.

His inner nature always seemed to be just struggling forth almost against his will, mastering his rough exterior, just as in pibrochs, after the skirling of the pipes has died away, a tender melody breaks out, fitful and plaintive, speaking of islands lost in misty seas, of things forgotten and misunderstood, of the faint, swishing noise of heather in the rain moved by the breeze at night, and which through minor modulations and fantastic trills ends in a wild lament for some Fingalian hero, like the wind sighing through the pines.

Nothing was more congenial to his humour than to unpack his recollections of the past, seated before the fire, an oily black cigar which

he chewed almost like a quid between his teeth, and with a glass of whisky by his side.

After expatiating upon the excellencies of his lame, jibbing chestnut mare, that he had bought at Falkirk Tryst from a quite honest dealer, but which had gone mysteriously so lame that even whisky for his groom had no effect in curing her, he usually used to lament upon the changes which the course of time had brought about. All was a grief to him, as it is really to all of us, if we all knew it, that some particular landmark of his life had disappeared. No one spoke Gaelic nowadays, although he never in his life had known a word of it. The use of "weepers" and crape hat-bands by the country-folk on Sunday was quite discontinued, and no one took their collie dogs to church. Coffins were now no longer carried shoulder-high across the hills from lonely upland straths, as he remembered to have seen them in his youth. Did not some funeral party in his childhood, taking a short cut on a frozen loch, fall through and perish to a man?—a circumstance he naturally deplored, but still regretted, as men of older generations may have regretted highwaymen, as they sat safely by their fire. Although he never fished, he was quite certain

no one now alive could busk a fly as well as a departed worthy of his youth, one Dan-a-Haltie, or make a withy basket or those osier loops which formerly were stuck between the "divots" in a dry stone dike, projecting outwards like a torpedo netting, to stop sheep jumping from a field. Words such as *flauchtered feal* and *laroch* were hardly understood; shepherds read newspapers as they lay out upon the hill, the Shorter Catechism had been miserably abridged, and the old fir-tree by the Shannochill was blasted at the top.

All these complaints he uttered philosophically, not in a plaintive way, but as a man who, at his birth, had entered as it were into a covenant with life just as it was, which he for his part had faithfully observed, but was deceived by fate.

Then when he had relieved his mind he used to laugh and, puffing out the smoke of his thick black cigar, which hung about the tufts which sprung out of his nostrils, just as the mist hangs dank above a bog, he would remark, "I'm haverin'," as if he was afraid of having to explain himself to something in his mind. On these occasions, I used to let him sit a little, and usually he would begin again, after a look

to see if I had noticed the gag he suddenly had put upon himself, and then start off again. "Ye mind my aunt, Miss Christian Jean?" I did, eating her sweetmeats in my youth, and trembling at her frown.

"Ye never heard me tell how it was I kisted her," he said, and then again fell into contemplation, and once again began. "My aunt, Miss Christian Jean, was a survival of the fittest—aye, ye know I am in some things quite opposed to Darwin, the survival of the potter's wheel in the Fijis and several other things . . . aye, haverin' again . . . or the most unfitted to survive.

"She was a gentlewoman, . . . yes, yes, the very word is now half ludicrous, ye need not smile, . . . lady is a poor substitute. Tall, dark, and masculine, and with a down upon her upper lip that many a cornet of dragoons, for there were cornets in those days, might well have envied, she was a sort of providence, jealous and swift in chastisement, but yet a providence to all the younger members of her race who came across her path.

"I see her now, her and her maid, old Katherine Sinclair, a tall, gaunt Highland woman, who might easily have walked straight

from the pages of Rob Roy, and her old butler, Robert Cameron, grey and red-faced, and dressed eternally in a black suit, all stained with snuff, a pawky sort of chiel, religious and still with the spirit of revolt against all dogmatism which modern life and cheap and stereotyped instruction has quite stamped out to-day. My aunt kept order in her house, that is as far as others were concerned. Each day she read her chapter, in what she styled the Book, not taking over heed how she selected it, so that the chapter once was duly read. It happened sometimes that when she came into the room where, as my cousin Andrew used to say—ye mind that he was drowned in one of those Green's ships, fell from aloft whilst they were reefing topsails in a dark night somewhere about the Cape.

“I've heard him say he could come down the weather-leach of a topsail, just like a monkey, by the bolt ropes. . . . Where was I, eh? Aye, I mind, he used to say that my aunt's prayers reminded him of service in a ship, with all hands mustered; so as I said, my aunt would sometimes open up the book and come upon a chapter full of names, and how some one begat another body and sometimes upon things

perfectly awesome for a maiden lady to read aloud, for 'twas all one to her.

“Then the old butler would put his hand up to his mouth and whisper, ‘Mem, Miss Christian, Mem, ye’re wandered,’ and she would close the book, or start again upon another chapter and maybe twice as long.

“My aunt and her two satellites kept such good order, that a visitor from England, seeing her neat and white-capped maids file in and take their seats facing the menservants, expressed her pleasure at the well ordered, comely worship, and received the answer, ‘Yes, my dear, ye see at family prayers we have the separation of the sexes, but I understand when they meet afterwards at the stair foot, the kissing beats the cracking of a whip.’

“Poor Aunt Christian, I used to shiver at her nod, and well remember when a youth how she would flyte me when I pinched the maids, and say, ‘Laddie, I canna’ have you making the girls squeal like Highland ponies; it is not décent, and decency comes next after morality, sometimes, I think, before it, for it can be attained, whereas the other is a counsel of perfection set up on high, but well out of our reach.’

“A pretty moraliser was my poor aunt, almost a heathen in her theory, guided by what she said were natural laws, and yet a Puritan in practice, whereas I always was a theoretic Puritan, but shaped my life exclusively by natural laws, as they appear to me.

“Let ministers just haver as they will, one line of conduct is not possible for nephews and for aunts. Take David, now, the man after the Lord’s own heart, and ask yourself what would have happened if his aunt . . . aye, aye, I’m wandered from my tale . . . I ken I’m wandering.

“Well, well, it seemed as if my aunt might have gone on for ever, getting a little dryer and her face more peakit, as the years went by and her old friends dropped off and left her all alone. That’s what it is, ye see; it’s got to come, although it seems impossible whilst we sit talking here and drinking—that is, I drinking and you listening to me talk. One wintry day I was just sitting wiping the cee-spring of a gun, and looking out upon the avenue, when, through the wreaths, I saw a boy on a bit yellow pony-beast come trotting through the snow.



“It was before the days of telegrams, and I jaloused that there was something special, or no one would have sent the laddie out on such a day, with the snow drifted half a yard upon the ground, the trees all white with cranruch like the sugar on a cake, and the frost keen enough to split a pudding stone and grind it into sand.

“I sent the laddie to the kitchen fire, and ripped the envelope, whilst the bit pony rooted round for grass and walked upon the reins. The letter told me that my aunt had had a fit, was signed by ‘Robert Cameron, butler,’ and was all daubed with snuff, and in a postscript I was asked to hurry, for the time was short, and to come straight across the hill as the low road was blocked by the snow drifting and nobody could pass. I harnessed up my mare—not the bit blooded chestnut I drive now”—this was the way in which he spoke of the lame cripple which had conveyed him to my house—“but a stout sort of Highland mouse-coloured beastie that I had, rather short backit, a little hammer-headed, and with the hair upon the fetlocks like a Clydesdale. . . . Maun, I think ye dinna’ often see such sort of beasts the now.” I mentally thanked God for it, and he again launched out into his tale.

“An awful drive, I’m tellin’ ye! I hadna’ got above Auchyle—ye mind, at the old bridge just where yon English tourist coupit his creels, and gaed to heaven, maybe last summer—when I saw I had a job. The snow balled in the mare’s feet as big as cabbages, and made her stotter in her gait, just like a drunken curler ettlin’ to walk upon a rink. I had to take her by the head till we got on the flat ground, up about Rusky. Man, it was arctic, and the little loch lay like a sheet of glass that had been breathed upon, with the dead bulrushes and reeds all sticking through the ice! The island in the loch seemed but a blob of white, and the old tower (I dinna’ richtly mind if, at one time, it belonged to some of your own folk) loomed up like Stirling Castle or like Doune in the keen frosty air. The little firwood on the east side of the old change-house—that one they called Wright, or some such name, once keepit—was full of roe, all sheltering like cows, so cold and starved they scarcely steered when I passed by and gave a shout to warm my lungs and hearten up the mare; and a cock capercailzie, moping and miserable, sat on a fir tree like a barn-door fowl. I ploutered on just to where there used to be a gate across

the road, where ye see Uamh Var and the great shoulder of Ben Ledi stretching up out by the pass of Leny and the old chapel of St. Bryde. It was fair awesome; I did not rightly know the landscape with the familiar features blotted out. I very nearly got myself wandered just in the straight above the Gart, for all the dikes were sunk beneath the snow, and the hedge-tops peeped up like box in an old cabbage-garden. At last I reached the avenue, the mare fair taigled, and the ice hanging from her fetlocks and her mane and wagging to and fro. The evergreens were, so to speak, a-wash, and looked like beds of parsley or of greens, and underneath the trees the squirrels' footsteps in the snow seemed those of some strange birds, where they had melted and then frozen on the ground. Across the sky a crow or two flew slowly, flapping their wings as if the joint oil had been frozen in their bones and cawing sullenly.

“On the high steps which led up to the door the butler met me, and as he took my coat, said, ‘Laird, ye are welcome; your poor dear auntie’s going. Hech, sirs, ’twill be an awfu’ nicht for the poor leddy to be fleein’ naked through the air towards the judgment-seat.

Will ye tak speerits or a dish o' tea after your coldsome drive, or will I tak' ye straight in to your aunt? I'm feared she willna' know you. But His will be done, though I could wish He might hae held His hand a little longer; but we must not repine. I've just been readin' out to her from the old Book, ye ken, passin' the time awa' and waitin' for the end.'

"All day my aunt lay dozing, half-conscious and half-stupefied, and all the day the butler, sitting by the bed, read psalms and chapters, to which she sometimes seemed to pay attention, and at others lay so still we thought that she was dead. Now and again he stopped his reading, and peering at his mistress with his spectacles pushed up, wiped off the tears that trickled down his face with his red handkerchief, and, as if doubting he were reading to the living or the dead, said, 'Nod yer heid, Miss Christian,' which she did feebly, and he, satisfied she understood, mumbled on piously in a thick undertone.

"Just about morning she passed away quite quietly, the maids and butler standing round the bed, they crying silently, and he snorting in his red pocket-handkerchief, with the tears running down his face. The gaunt old Highland

waiting-woman raised a high wail which echoed through the cold and silent house, causing the dogs to bark and the old parrot scream, and the butler stottered from the room, muttering that he would go and see if tea was ready, closing the door behind him with his foot, as if he feared the figure on the bed would scold him, as she had often done during her life, if it slammed to and made a noise.

“All the week through it snowed, and my aunt’s house was dismal, smelling of cheese and honey, yellow soap, of jam, of grease burnt in the fire, and with the dogs and cats uncared for rambling about and sleeping on the chairs. The cold was penetrating, and I wandered up and down the stairs quite aimlessly, feeling like Alexander Selkirk in the melancholy house, which seemed an island cut off from the world by a white sea of snow. None of Aunt Christian’s friends or relatives could come, as all the roads were blocked ; even her coffin was not sent till a few hours before the funeral, the cart that brought it stalling in the snow, and the black-coated undertaker’s men carrying it shoulder-high through the thick wreaths upon the avenue.

“The servants would not have a stranger

touch the corpse, and the old butler and myself kisted my aunt, lifting her body from the bed between the two of us. A week had passed and she looked black and shrunken, and as I lifted her, the chill from the cold flesh struck me with horror, and welled into the bones. I could not kiss her as she lay like a mummy in the kist, for the shrunk face with the white clothes about the chin was not the same Aunt Christian's, whom I had loved and before whom I trembled for so many years, but changed somehow and horrible to see.

“The butler did, looking at me, as I thought, half reproachfully as I stood silently, not once crying but half stupefied, and then as she lay shrunken and brown on the white satin lining of the kist, we stood and looked at one another, just as we had been partners in a crime, till they began to hammer down the lid. A drearsome sound it makes. One feels the nails are sticking in the flesh, and every time ye hear it, it just affects ye more than the last time, the same as an earthquake, as I mind I heard a traveller say one day in Edinburgh. What the old butler did, I do not mind; but I just dandered out into the garden, and washed my hands in snow, not that I felt a skunner at

my poor Aunt Christian's flesh, but somehow I had to do it, for ye ken 'twas the first time."

Laird Wallace stopped just as a horse props suddenly when he is fresh and changes feet, then breaking into Scotch, said: "I have talked enough. That's how I kisted my Aunt Christian Jean, *puir leddy*, a sair job it was, and dreich. . . . Thank ye, nae soddy, I'll tak' a drop of Lagavoulin." Then lighting a cigar, he said, "Ring for my dog-cart, please," and when it came he clambered to the seat, and pointing to his spavined mare, said, "Man, a gran' beast, clean thorough-bred, fit to run for her life" (and this to me who knew her); then, bidding me good-night, drew his whip smartly on her scraggy flank, and vanished through the trees.

## TOBAR NA REIL

RIGHT at the summit of the pass it lies, nothing above it but the sky. On every side the billowing heath-clad hills engirdle it about. Flat stones encircle it, and on its surface water spiders walk. Red persicaria, with wax-like stalks and ragged leaves, grows by its edge. Below it stretches out a vast brown moss, honeycombed here and there with black peat hags, and a dark lake spreads out, ringed on one side with moss, and on the other set like a jewel in a pine wood, with a white stretch of intervening sand. On it are islands with great sycamores and chestnuts, stag-headed but still vigorous, and round their shores the bulrushes keep watch like sentinels. Mists rise from moss and lake and creep about the corries of the hills, blending the woods and rocks into a steamy chaos, vast and unfathomable, through which a little burn unseen, but musical, runs tinkling through the stones. So at the little *bealach* the well lies open to the sky, too high



for the lake mists to touch it, as it looks up at the stars.

They say that on a certain day in mid-summer, a star when at its zenith shines into the well. Which the star is, if Rigel or Algól or Aldebáran with his russet fire, is clean forgotten, for nowadays tradition has scant place in men's imagining. He who looks on the water at the fateful hour, and sees the star reflected in the well, acquires again the ancient universal tongue, by which in ages past men and the animals held speech. For him the language of the birds becomes intelligible. The trees that groan or whisper in the breeze divulge their lore, and disclose all that they have seen in their long peaceful lives. Fish in the rivers and the lakes have no more dread of him, and, rising to the surface of the linns, tell him the marvels of the deep, whilst snakes and lizards, with newts, the moles and bats, impart their troubles or their joys, making their little secrets plain, by the strange virtues of the mystic star transmitted through the well.

There is no record of any one who, having drunk, obtained the power and straightway got into communication with all animals and things. No doubt if at the appointed hour the fountain

had turned all to gold, a town would have arisen on the pass, and Baal's priesthood or an aristocracy would have reserved the right to drink and gaze upon the well, and temples of Algól or Aldebáran would have sprung up as if by magic from the hill. But man, who lives an outcast from all living things, cut off by pride and want of sympathy from beasts and birds, and careless of his own connection with the world except so far as it may bring him the twin curses, wealth and power, which have combined to make him vile, cared not for such a gift. So trees and animals and beasts, with stones and streams, watched vainly every recurring year throughout the centuries for some adventurer who should break through the bonds which held the self-crowned monarch of the world in silence, condemned for ever to live dumb but to his own kind's speech, whilst on all sides secrets he never dreamed of were waiting to be heard. So as a Highlander went past, driving his cattle from the low country in Menteith, or in the summer evenings a group of men wrapped in their plaids, with curly hazel shepherd's sticks, and carrying long single-barrelled Spanish guns, trotted along the steep and winding path, their deerskin shoes

making no sound upon the stones, the rabbits sitting at their holes watched them expectantly. The birds upon the branches turned their round heads and looked towards the well. The trees and plants and heather on the hill seemed to sigh softly in the summer air, as if inviting them to halt until the mystic star should rise, then drink and break the spell.

But they, absorbed in the affairs of life, which lead men onward prisoners to the grave, discoursed of hogs and pownie-beasts, of trysts and markets, and of the price of hirsells and of queys. At times they stopped and drank, but never lingered, scooping the water in their palms or in their *cuachan* of birch-wood hooped with silver, drawing their hands across their mouths, and sometimes murmuring, "Aye, och aye, they say that when a body drinks here, when the stars are up, he learns a vast o' things, that's why they ca' it *Tobar na Reil*, but I mind lying here aince o' a summer's night, sleeping ye ken, after some awqua that I had doon by at old McKureton's, and never learned a thing."

And whilst they talked, the trees and stars, half-sleeping in the cold moon's light, listened but drowsily, and all they heard was Angus

answer Finlay, "Och aye, McKureton just keeps the finest awqua that I ever drank no more, Finlay McLachlan," and his compeer and fellow-driver, looking up whilst kneeling by the spring, would answer sapiently, "And neither did I too." And so the well slept on, having for its one tragedy the fight between the Grahams of Menteith, and Stuarts on a raid from Appin, whose leader's head, struck by a sword-cut from his body at a blow, rolled down the pass, calling out imprecations even after death.

With the exception of this brief tragedy, history the well has none. Its very name means nothing to the men who now inhabit, where once its namers dwelt. The legend lives as a tradition, to be laughed or wondered at, according to the attitude of mind of him who hears it, for education has new superstitions of its own, which have expelled those of the older race. Who that to-day, when all flee from responsibility as from the plague, would incur the burden of the sorrow of the trees, the winds, the beasts? for man aspires not to equality but to command, by which, when he possesses it, he straightly becomes an outcast from his kind.

Yet, had it been but for the pleasure of another sorrow to his life, 'tis strange that no one quenched his thirst, for joy is transient, whilst sorrow lives for ever, and to prove sorrows yet unknown might have stirred some one with imagination, had there been any such a traveller on the road which winds by Glenny to the valley of the Teith. And yet the district set with *Sith-bhrughan* and with traditions of a fairy causeway in the lake, a borderland of races in the past, a frontier where the Lowland hob and Highland pixie met on neutral ground, to dance upon the green, seemed to invite experiment, and call for its Columbus to explore a newer world than that he saw in Guanaháni from his caravel.

A gentle world in which no hatred reigns ; where envy and all malice are unknown, where each one tells his secret to his friend unwittingly, because the speech they use is universal and without volition, and not as ours, confined to persons and articulate. The speech that lives in the clear water of the well, at the conjuncture of the star, has no vocabulary, no rules, no difficulties, but he who has it, speaks as does the wind, and saying nothing in particular, is understood of all. Thus it can never lie, or

lead astray, and so is valueless to us, as valueless as gold upon a desert island, with no one to enslave.

No one has claimed it since the first framers of the legend paddled their coracles upon the lake ; no one will claim it, or ever think but for an instant of the treasure waiting to be grasped. Red-deer and roe and kyloes on the hills are all born free of it, and swallows from the south need no interpreter, but straightway tell their travels to the birds who but a week ago have left the pole, or to the weasels and the wrens who never wandered more than a mile or two from where they saw the light ; they find themselves as much at home amongst the scrubby copse, as they were, only a month ago, in cane brakes and in palms.

But if the birds and beasts, the trees and grasses and the stones, mourn the estrangement and the want of faith of man, so does mankind feel vaguely its own loneliness amongst created things with which it cannot have communication, and before which it always must be dumb. What tender idylls moss and lichens could unfold, if only some one of the passers-by throughout the centuries had learned their speech, and taught his children, taking

them, as the most sacred duty in his power, upon the star's appearance in its round, to drink and learn, and thus transmit their knowledge to their children, making them all hereditary dragomen by right divine, betwixt their race and the creation of the beasts.

Drink and admire, the motto says, upon the well in far Marrákesh set among its palms. Above the fountain, built by some pious pilgrim, who perhaps had felt the desert's thirst and reared this monument to the one God—He who alone brings comfort in the sands—the horseshoe arch is blue with pottery. Intricate patterns marked in lustrous tiles cross and recross each other, and arabesques repeat some pious saw or play upon God's name. Over the humble fountain on the pass unknown to fame, the skies are canopy, and the stars set in them, celestial glow-worms of the firmament, which mark the hours the passers-by neglect. No pious pilgrim there has hedged about the spring with masonry; no sculptured stone relates its virtues, for it serves but as a drinking-place for roe, who as they drink admire and give their thanks instinctively, wiser by far than man. No one remembers the lone well among the heath or cares for it,

but to smile scornfully at the old simple legend of the past. In all the district where it lies, few know its bearings, and for the name, refer to it "as a sort o' Gaelic fash about a star; I mind my feyther kent the meaning o' it," dismissing it at once as "juist a haver, auncient but fair redeeklous, an auld wife's clishmaclaver," beneath the notice of an "edicated man."

So it sleeps quietly upon the pass just where the road descends to Vennachar and rises from Menteith. Winds sweep the bents and rustle in the ling, setting the cotton-grass a-quivering, bowing the heads of the bog asphodel, and carrying with them the sharp perfume of the gale, sweeter and homelier than the spice of Araby.

In the dark mirror of the lake below, the priory and the castle hang head downwards, and on the bulrushed shore the wavelets break amongst the stones. The earl's old pleasance, now neglected, is a park for cows, its few surviving sycamores have withered at the top, and soon will follow those who planted them into the misty region of the past.

The well, the star, the scrubby oak copse on the hill, the old Fingalian road, distinct in moonlight, or in the morning after frost, for



time itself appears unable to efface the taint man's footsteps leave upon the ground, remain and call to the chance passer-by to stop and drink at the conjunction of the star. They call in vain, and nature in the breeze still raises its lament, uncomprehended by the ears of man, who, in his self-forged fetters, fails to understand.

## THE GREY KIRK

IN a grey valley between hills, shut out from all the world by mist and moors, there lies a village with a little church.

The ruined castle in the reedy loch, by which stand herons fishing in the rank growth of flags, of bulrush and hemp-agrimony which fringes it, is scarcely greyer than the hills. The outcrop of the stone is grey, the lowering clouds, the slated roofs, the shingly river's bed and the clear water of the stream. The very trout that dart between the stones, or hang suspended where the current joins the linn, look grey as eels.

Green markings on the moors show where once paths the border prickers followed on their wiry nags led towards the south, the land of fatted beeves and well-stored larders, clearly designed by Providence or fate to be the jackman's prey, but long disused, forgotten and grassed over, though with the ineffaceable imprint of immemorial use still clear.

Dark, geometrical plantations of black fir and spruce deface the hills, which nature evidently made to bear a coat of scrubby oak and birch. Wire fences gird them round, the posts well tarred against the weather, and the barbed wire so taut that the fierce winds might use them as Æolian harps, could they but lend themselves to song.

A district which the wildness of the past has so impressed, that the main line of railway steals through its corries and across its moors as it were under protest, and where the curlew mocks the engine's whistle with his wilder cry.

The village clusters round the kirk, as bees crowd round their queen, the older houses thatched. Their coping-stones carved with a rope, remain to show how, in the older world, their rustic architects secured their roofs against the blast.

No doubt the hamlet grew between the castle and the church. The jackman of the chief, the sacristan and kindly tenants of the church, ready and near at hand to put on splent and spur, and able to take lance or sprig of hyssop in their hand at the first tinkle of the bell or rout of horn.

The castle in the loch has dwindled to a pile .

of stones, from which spring alders, birches and sycamores, whose keys hang yellow in the wind, unlocking nothing but the sadness of the heart, which marks their growth, from the decay of the abandoned keep.

A modern mansion set with its shrubberies and paltry planted woods, where once the Caledonian forest sheltered the wild white cattle in its glades, seems out of place in the surrounding grey. Its lodge, with trim-cut laurels and with aucubas and iron gate, run in a foundry from a mould, is trivial, comfortable and modern; and the low sullen hills appear to scorn it in their fight with time, for they remain unchanged from the bold time of rugging and of rieving, when spearsmen, not a pensioned butler, kept the gate.

The crumbling and decayed stone wall, secluding jealously the boggy meadows of the park, shuts off the modern mansion with its electric light, its motor-cars, its liveried servants and its air of castellated meanness, from the old houses huddling in the wynd. They look towards the chapel with its high-pitched roof, its squat round tower with crenellated top and its sharp windows pointed like a lance. It seems to gaze at them, as if it felt they were

the only links that time has left it with its old own world. The eye avoids the modern buildings in the town, the parish church, four square and hideous, with windows like a house, and from the hills falls on the chapel and is satisfied. Only in some old missal, with the illustrations by some monk adscribed to his small round of daily cares, can you behold its equal, as it stands desolate and grey.

The chapel of a race of warriors, men dark and grey as is the stone of which its walls are built, once a lone outpost of the great mother fort in Rome, it lingers after them, sheltering their tombs and speaking of their fame. Instinctively one feels that once its doors stood open, just as it were a mosque or church in lands where faith continues the whole week, and men pray as they eat or sleep, just when they feel inclined, and naturally as birds.

In the green churchyard, whose grassy hillocks wave it like a sea, the long grey tombstones of the undistinguished dead appear like boats that make towards some haven, laying their courses by the beacon of the tower.

The church itself floats like a ship turned bottom upwards on the grassy sea. Its voyage is ended, and the men who once clattered in

armour in its aisles and through its nave now sleep below its flags. A maiméd ritual and a sterner creed prevail, and those who worship in the church have shown their faith by laying down encaustic tiles over the spur-marked stones on which their forebears jingled in their mail. A fair communion table of hewn stone, smug and well-finished and with the wounds upon the bleeding heart all stanchéd (as one would think), stands where the altar stood, cold and uninteresting, a symbol of the age. *Non ragioniam* ; on every side, lie those who, in their time, carried their wars across the border, and on the bridge at Rome charged on the people who pressed round them, just as they would have charged in Edinburgh, had any other clan presumed to take the croon of the old causeway of the High Street, and brought upon themselves an excommunication from the Pope.

Stretched under canopies of stone they lie, looking so grim and so impenitent, that one is sure they must be satisfied with their presentments, if, looking down on their old haunts, they see their images. Many are absent who would have filled a niche right worthily, Tine-man and the Black Knight of Jedburgh and

others of the house, who, in their time, shook Scotland to the core. But in the middle of the aisle, in leaden caskets hooped with iron and padlocked, lie two hearts. One, that of Archibald who belled the cat. The other heart has travelled much, and in its life beat higher with all generous thoughts than any of its race.

He who possessed it (or was possessed by it), liked ever better, as he said, to hear the lave-rocks' singing than the cheeping of the mouse. His hands were able, all his adventurous life, to keep his cheeks from scars, as he averred in Seville to the Spanish knight, who wondered at their absence from his face. Carrying a heart to Palestine, he fell, not in the Holy Land, but on the frontiers of Granada, that last outpost of the Eastern world. The heart he carried lies at Melrose, and his own, sealed fast in lead, soldered perhaps in some wild camp lost in the Ajaráfé of Sevilla, is the chief ornament of the grey chapel of his race.

Set like a ship, the chapel lies in the long waves of sullen hill and moor that roll away towards the south.

In its long voyage through the sea of time, crews of wild warriors have clung to it, as their one refuge from the spear of life. Each in their

turn have fallen away, leaving it lonely, but still weather-tight and taut; a monument of faith, as some may think, or of good masonry and well-slaked lime, as the profane may say, still sailing on the billowy moors which stretch towards Muirkirk; so little altered that any one of those who in the past have prayed within its walls, if he returned to a changed world, would cling to it as the one thing he knew.

So it drifts on upon its voyage through time, bearing its freight of warriors to their port.



## DAGOS

CADIZ was stifling, and all the world sat waiting for the breeze. In the dark streets, which cut like drains right through the town, not a breath stirred to break the heat. The cries of water-sellers, with their guttural "Aguaa," long prolonged and Arab sounding, broke the still air, just as a corncrake's cry falls on the ear as a relief, when in the wheat-fields of the south the sun pours down as he would bake the earth, and seems to set the air in motion by its sound. The gardens in the plazas drooped, and the long bells of the daturas closed up as if they slept the siesta during the hot hours.

The city lay, a very cup of burnished silver, in the fierce glare, and in the waters of the bay the pink and blue and yellow houses were reflected, looking as if a coral reef had turned into a town. The waves just crept about the great black shoal known as "Las Puercas," lazily swashing on the cruel stones which have

so often pierced the sides of ships, in winter, when the Levanté blows.

Men slept in rows on the lee side of boats. The horses in the cabs hung their tired heads, and where a man threw water at a café door upon the street, a steam ascended, as if the stones were heated underneath.

Only upon the alameda, that of Apodaca, where the sea-breeze first strikes, the palm trees braved the sun, seeming to draw new life from out its rays; and at their tops there ran a murmur, as when a little air just plays upon the outside leach of a lateen, making it crinkle up before it fills the belly of the sail and strains upon the sheet.

But in the cafés of the Calle Ancha the people, sitting drinking their *horchata* and *agráz*, talked just as loud and just as earnestly as if their conversation ran on some great principle, or as if something was at stake. Upon the shady side, the ladies, their faces white with powder, which made their great black eyes look larger and more lustrous, walked up and down, swaying a little on their hips, just as a thoroughbred walks in the paddock before saddling, receiving as they went a shower of compliments and *quodlibets*, which would have

made a woman unaccustomed to such fire fairly turn tail and run, but which just made the colour heighten a little underneath the powder on their cheeks, increased the flame of their black eyes, and made the swaying of their walk a little more pronounced as they held on their course, as the feluccas in the bay stood up to a beam wind.

Just at the corner of the Calle Columela at a small café where sailors congregate, a fan shop on one side and on the other a *refino*, a group of men sat talking lazily.

At last, one rising, said, "I hear it coming," and as he spoke, up the deep street there came a sighing, and the breeze, bearing a little flight of bats before it, which passed like swallows just above the heads of all the idlers with a shrill twittering, came rushing through the funnel made by the houses, after the fashion of a bore, when it ascends a river on a low, shoaly coast.

It came, bending the palm trees with its sweep, making their leaves all rustle on the trunks, and spreading a red haze over the low and arid hills above San Lucar, and by Rota, and making ships at anchor at the Trocadero

balance a little as the white lacy net of foam ran seething past their bows.

Within the town it worked a wondrous change, for when the dust it brought at first had cleared away, the horses in the cabs pricked up their ears and looked as if ten years had been rolled off their lives; the loafers on the quays got up and shook themselves, throwing their tattered jackets, which had served for pillows on the stones, across their shoulders, and, after having looked out seaward with a long stare at the horizon to see if any vessel was in sight, straggled in groups towards the plaza to pass the evening on the seats.

Fans worked less lazily, and in the cafés men, after lighting cigarettes, mopped their wet brows and settled down to talk, which in the little fairy city, with its long piles of dazzling salt ringing it round like outworks to landward, and its blue sea which, dashing up against the walls, showers spray upon the blood and orange banner on the low ramparts of the fort, is the chief object of their lives.

The sailors in the little café, captains of ships of every nation upon earth, all felt the spell of the invigorating breeze, and by degrees their talk after a few attempts at topics which

to most landsmen have a certain vogue, as horses, women, theatres, and politics, soon by degrees drifted back naturally to the one subject of real interest, the sea, the element by which all lived, and which whilst all abusing so had wound itself about their lives as to exclude aught else as absolutely as if they had been born in it, like porpoises or whales. Mostly the men were northerners, blue-eyed and freckled Swedes, Danes, or Norwegians, whose rough serge clothes and heavy boots contrasted strangely with the stray Spaniards and Italians who in their pointed-toed, white canvas shoes and spotless linen scarcely looked sailors beside their brethren from the North, whose huge red hands beat on the table when they emphasized their points, like a door banging in the wind.

Two things, however, formed a link between them, the sea, and that they all spoke English, more or less broken, as a common *lingua franca* in which they all could meet.

Captain Karl Harold, who had sailed for five-and-thirty years out of his little native port in Norway, bringing down deals to Malaga, to Almeria, and to the other ports in what he called "the Middle Sea," sat smoking a great

meerschaum pipe, on which a boar-hunt was depicted carved in high relief. His great red throat was cut across by the thin narrow linen band of his grey flannel shirt, till it looked like one portion of an hour-glass, and you divined that underneath it must be thinner and probably quite white. A small straw hat was set upon the back of his enormous head, and on his forehead stood great beads of perspiration, which he mopped up continually with a red pocket-handkerchief quite large enough to hoist upon a raft supposing he had suddenly been wrecked.

Quiet and unassuming, he sat drinking beer which disappeared down his capacious throat just as a fishing-boat may be sucked in and disappear from sight when caught at certain junctures of the tides in Coirebhreacain whirlpool or in the Moskoe-Strom. His speech was slow, and as he talked of countries he had seen, of port dues, of the villainies of certain governments which kept no lights on dangerous places of their coasts, his curly golden fleece, flecked here and there with grey, shaken by his emotion, set one a-thinking of what a sheep would look like if it could be endued with understanding and wake up to a sense of

all the wrongs it and its kind endured at the fell hands of man.

“Gadiss,” he said, “is fine little town; not too much cultivated the people in it; no man have heard of Ibsen; . . . de beer is goot too, but not very strong. I bore myself soon in Gadiss, and never can get any repairs done to my ship. I have mine main-yard littel sprung now, and have to go round to Gartagena to get it fixed. The theatre too is elementary, and have no psychologic in it. . . . Their dancing is goot, the Romans knew that. ‘Impropa Gadiss,’ they say, but I think perhaps Liverpool or Gardiff is more wicked as Gadiss, for the peoples is not so elementary as here. . . . Uf, ah, it is still hot! Can none of you tell us some story, eh? You, McMillan, or Fernandey, eh? Don Joesay, Why you not tell us littel something, eh?”

Before Fernandez had time to speak, Captain McMillan cut in with: “Ay, Fernandey, something about yon time you had the blackbird-catching schooner, when ye ran niggers up to North Queensland from the New Hebrides. Man, a gran’ business that slaving—I mean the importation of indentured labour. I’ve heard it was a fair saxty per cent job.

. . . Saxty per cent!—worth a little risking in these days o' low freights and big insurance money. I mind I had a wee bit flutter, way back in the sixties, wi' a bit cargo, ane o' the last was run. I landed them in a wee port—na, na, I'll no tell ye the name o' it—doon about Rio Grande do Sul, the Brazeels, ye ken. A queer felly yon king up at Loandy; we ca'ed him Brass Belly, and a Christian too, except of course when there was business on. Weel, they just had a friar up in the bit port, before I got my stuff on board . . . thae "Portygees," ye ken . . . and had them a' baptized . . . just throwing holy water on them in a horn, and mumbling a when Latin, and makin' crosses in the air—fair superstition, I ca'ed it; and I'm telling ye, when aince I got to sea I had out the old Book, and just undid his job . . . had them a' resprinkled, and pit up a bit prayer ower them in the Free Kirk o' Scotland style. There was no reunion o' the free churches in thae days . . . nane o' your U.F.'s set them up. A when o' they newly admitted Christians died on the passage, but the lave o' them I got safe enough to Rio Grande do Sul, and, man, a gran' price I got for them. Nae one ever jaloused



they were all sort of members of the Free Kirk, or God knows what would ha' happened. They Brazeelians are a superstitious lot. . . . Tell us yer yarn, Captain Fernandey ; oot wi' it, Don Joesay."

He paused, and opened a bottle of soda-water, letting the cork fly with a bang and most of the contents spurt out, and then pouring himself about a claret glass of whisky, tempered it slightly with what soda still remained, and drained it to the dregs, but slowly and with as little effort as if it had been milk.

Boys selling lottery tickets dangled them underneath the noses of the customers, beseeching them to buy and win the biggest prize ; beggars came in and stood behind the tables resisting all the objurgations of the assembled northern skippers and disappearing instantly when they heard Captain Fernandez say "May God assist you" in a quiet tone of voice. Silent and rather dapper-looking, he sat sipping lemonade, smoking innumerable cigarettes, and now and then assenting gravely with a "*Bueno!* Yes, that iss so," or merely by a slight clicking of his tongue against the palate and a faint upward motion of the head.

Short, slight, and burned so dark you might have thought that he had Indian blood ; one thin and nervous hand, on which a heavy diamond ring shone like electric light, held his eternal cigarette ; the other now and then stole almost unconsciously behind his back and rested for an instant, as if to reassure himself that it was there, upon a little hump formed by the handle of his pistol underneath his coat.

As all his fellows looked at him he slightly flicked the ash off from his cigarette against the edge of the white marble table around which they sat, and blowing out an interminable cloud of smoke from both his nostrils, said : " Why, you fellows want to hear a tale ; it is still time to see the third piece at the theatre, or we can go and hear the Mochuelito sing ' Las Chiclaneras.' How he bewails himself, the little gipsy rogue ; not his like in all the Spains to hang upon a note." No one adventuring anything except a grunt from Captain Harold that " De folk music of the zooth, with de irregular intervals it have, say nothing to me," Fernandez slowly began to speak, half automatically : " My friends, I think of something happen to me long ago ; plenty of the psychology in it, Captain Karl, enough

to satisfy your Ibsen, he who have so much grace." The passing jibe left Captain Harold quite unmoved save for a puffing out of his great cheeks and a slight blowing sound as when a whale has finished spouting and lies upon the water as if it contemplated whether it should begin again or sink into the depths. "It was way back—my God! I think it was thirty-five, perhaps forty year passed. I was third mate in a Peruvian barquentine trading from Paita, up the coast to San Francisco, Guaymas, San Blas, and Mazatlán, Salina-Cruz, Tehuantepec, and Acapulco, and all those littel ports in Mexico.

"The barquentine was built in Paita. Beautiful she was; they never build no such vessels now these days."

"Stow the description," cut in McMillan; "I never had a guid conceit o' thae bit Paity barquentines. . . . Yon way of staying forward the topgallant mast and lashing every sail down to a spar, looks fair theatrical. . . ."

"All is in the taste, my McMillan. You talk about your Scotch girls and say nothing like number one West Highland lassie; she have straight back, short leg, and head like sunset, I think she look like German dachshund.

. . . All is in the taste. . . . Where was I now? Ah, yes, the barquentine. She was called 'La Estrella de Paita.' She was clipper number one. . . . I see her now; she sit upon the water just as she had been blown there like a leaf off a tree.

"She was all right, it was the people that was in her that was bad. Most of them Indians—Cholos from the Bolivian ports and from Peru, one or two Correntinos from the Argentine Republic, half gauchos and half sailors, and with another part half devils, the cook a negro from about Panama or Savanilla, and two or three quite decent fishermen from Chiloé. You bet your ole sea-boot you have to keep your weather-eye well skin with all those infidels.

"The skipper was a Mexican, hail from Arispé. Cristo, what a man! He knew the coast blind-drunk and blindfold, and that was all he know.

"Ah, yes, Captain Karl Harold say, come heave round Rodney, and it is time, and it is true I am a little slow in making plain sail on my yarn.

"Well, let me see. . . . Yes, we were dodging up the coast of Lower California, inside what we call Sea of Cortés and you the

Californian Gulf. We have well passed the islands at the mouth ; islands of Revillagigedo they are call, and their names San Benito, La Nublada, and cetera. We lay a little in towards the coast between San Blas and Mazatlán to catch the lightest air ; the ' Estrella ' sail almost if a lady move a fan. . . . But I say no more of her, eh. You know that coast, eh, friends?"

"I know him well," said Captain Karl, "just like the coast where Peer Gynt's yacht was lost and he find Providence not economical. Wonderful man dat Ibsen, what you call bawky up in Aberdeen."

"Pawky, you mean," said the indignant Scot, and once again Fernandez launched into his tale.

"Baffling light winds force us across amongst the islands opposite Cabo Haro upon the other coast. What so many islands and none of them inhabited by man—La Trinidad, Espiritu Santo ; what you call Holy Spirit, and Branciforte, Isla del Carmen—lands and still more islands, till you can have no rest. Just about midday we were running under easy sail under the lee of the large Isla del Carmen, hoping to get a slant of wind across to Guaymas to take us through the strait.

“What salt there is in Carmen Island, eh—green, white, and rose colour, almost as much as Cadiz—and, in my time, no one live on it, and only schooners from El Puerto de la Paz occasionally call. What you call jumping-off place, I think, though where you jump to except into the sea? But I remember; I was young then, five-and-thirty years ago—where have the years gone, tell me? . . . It was so interesting, for as you sail along the coast you feel like Alvarado or Cortés, and always think you come to something new, just as you think in life.

“What a fine day it was; and all that salt it looked like crystal in the sun, in some places like a garden, and all the streams run through a reddish sort of grounds. Scarcely a ripple on the sea, which have an oily look; just enough wind to keep the sails just drawing. You recollect that ‘La Estrella’ sail if you move a fan, eh; three or four fan make a stiff gale for her. Well, well, island of Branciforte was on her weather bow, three or four league away, and we just weathered Cabo de . . . I forget his name, but it is just where the salt finishes and the thick forests all begin, for island of Carmen is about twenty mile in length, and

broad, broad as from here to Rota, say about three league. When we pass by that little cape all changed at once, and it was fairyland— island of Carmen pretty, pretty when you pass that cape. Trees coming down right to the water edge, and little cove of sand so white you want to go ashore and bathe. All the crew came on deck to look at him, and the Correntinos, they say, ‘Ah, . . . like the country up the Paraná, by the Esquina,’ and they fall talking their Guarani, a heathen tongue it is. They say the devil go twelve years to school to learn him, and come away a fool.

“The two Chilótes stand open-mouth, like children at the window of a pastry-cook, and when the captain came on deck he looked across the bay and say: ‘Si, señor. Yes, a man could build a neat jacál there and have good time with a nice Indian wife, one of those Zapoteca girls if you could steal one from about Salina-Cruz, or if not a good Yaqui.’ ‘I always like an Indian girl,’ he say; ‘they are cooking well, and have no nonsense like white woman, and if you beat them, not go stick a knife in you when you are drunk or sleep.’ Not too much of a Christian was our old man, but he know all the coast from Guaymas down

to Paita as well as if he was a shark. His mother I think she was a Pima or a Yaqui, and you know no one can make good Christian out of an old Moor. Just as we were standing by to go about, and the wind looked like fresh'ning a little bit, he say, that is the captain say—(I think I tell you that his name was Guadalupé Perez.—No! ah, I thought I did)—he say there is a man upon the beach, running down to the shore. I jump upon the rail, and see him waving his arms and making signals with a bough. 'Strange,' say the skipper, 'a man on isle of Carmen, where there is no Indians, and only schooners touch from Puerto de la Paz to load up salt, and now and then hunt the wild goats that swarm about the place.' Well, the poor devil on the beach go on like semaphore, waving his arms about, and then he run down to the edge and go upon his knees. The old man curse a little about losing a fair wind, but give the order to back the fore topgallant sail and send away a boat.

“I went away with the two Correntinos in our dinghy to find out what was up. As we come close in the man ran to the boat up to the middle, and clamber in as if a tiger running



after him, and lie down in the bottom gasping like a fish.

“ I give him littel mescál. The ‘ Estrella ’ never carry rum, only mescál, because the skipper get it cheap up in Arispé, where they grow plenty aloes, what they call there maguéy. ‘ Ah, ’ say the man, and shake my hand as if he pull it off. He say in Spanish, for he was Chilian down from Talcahuano, ‘ That do me good. Mother of God ! three months and never see a man ; I think I going mad. ’

“ He was burnt almost black, and ragged I tell you, ragged like a saint down about Casablanca or at Mazagán ; his hair like bird’s nest, no shoes, and his feet all cracked with walking up and down hunting for shell-fish on the rocks. He look back always towards the island as if he thought the devil was behind the trees, and so I clap him on the shoulder and say, ‘ All right, ole man, cheer up your pecker, there is not nothing to be ’fraid of, and I shall take you to the ship. ’ At first he speak a little slow, but when he once get fairly under weigh the words come out like water from a barrel when you have set it run. He tell our skipper he have sailed from Copiapó and bound to San Francisco, and that the vessel founder out at

sea, and that he alone have reached the island floating upon some wreckage, about six months ago. He seem a little hazy about things and have a hang-dog look ; but we say that the poor man is mad with solitude, and have him shaved and washed and give him suit of dungaree and send him down below. He speak with no one, and when he eat a little come up upon deck and fix his eyes upon the island as if he sorry after all to leave it, so that I tell him, ' Eh, you, do you want go ashore again ? ' and he laugh like a rabbit when you kill him, and lights a cigarette. I tell you I did not much take to the fellow, he have a pug-dog look.

" We ran along the coast a bit, maybe an hour or two, as the wind had veered a little round, and doubled another little cape, and once again stand by to go about and stretch across the gulf. Just as the ole man going to give the order, up go his glass again, and he call out, ' Jesus Maria ! I think I see a smoke. Surely, ' he say, ' devils are in the island, ' and as he speak a column of black smoke rise up just by the wall of forest which stand behind the beach. Looked like as if some one had thrown green wood upon the fire to make the smoke more black. We edge her little nearer

in, and once again a man come running down the sand and wave his arms about. Same old nonsense—send a boat ashore, and come back to the ship with one more ragged Chilian very like the last. When he come up the side and see the man we first took off he stare a little, and with a yell grab a belaying pin and spring at him just like a jaguar.

“One of the Correntinos threw a rope about his neck. They were, I think I told you, half sailor and half gaucho, and with another half of devil in their blood—that make them ready for any kind of thing.

“Well, the ole man he look at them and say ‘Virgen de Guadalupé! Put her about; let me get off from isle of Carmen before some more poor shipwrecked Chilians come out of the woods and make my ship a lunatic asylum, for they are all stark mad.’

“We go about and lay our course for Guaymas, with a lively little wind, about a five-knot breeze, I think, and then the skipper have the two Chilians aft and question them about their devilment.

“It came out then that they were really the only two men saved out of their vessel which have founder in a fog. They reach

the shore upon some wreckage, and pretty nearly starve.

“Two months and three pass by, they all the time hunting for shell-fish and snaring birds to eat. Then something happen and they fight, then separate, for island of Carmen get too little for them if they live close and speak. Each think the other come and kill him in the night, and they pass all their time, each with a stick under his hand to keep his friend away. Then we come on the scene, and the first man hope that we never find the other—leave him there to die.”

He ceased, and the sea-breeze swept through the funnels of the streets in the now silent and deserted town as it would tear the cobble-stones out of their bedding, and the light scud raced overhead towards the east like feathers through the sky. The audience sat silent for a time, and then McMillan, taking up his parable, observed: “A curious case, Fernandey. Aye, oo, aye, I’m glad your fellows both were dawgos. I canna’ think that a white man could ever have descended to such a meanness. . . . Now I ca’ it just incredible in a full chop white man.”

Fernandez, holding a glass of water in his

hand, looked at him gravely and rejoined: "You see this water. All my life I have loved water, . . . good air, good water and good bells, the proverb says, and yet, when I have been in an old sailing-ship out in the eastern seas, and when the water had run short been put upon two pints a day for drink and cooking, I have stand round the barrel, and though it smelled just like the drainings of a tanyard, counted the drops when it was poured into my pannikin as if they had been gold.

"Si, señor, . . . that is I mean, . . . how do you put it, eh?—it is not good to say fountain—out of your basin I shall never drink . . . eh, no señor."

## A MEMORY OF PARNELL

HE always seemed to me a creature from another world, or a survival of some older type of man. Not that in ordinary respects he differed from the usual race of all mankind, having their passions, weaknesses, and all the rest developed to the full, together with an incapacity to get his stirrup-leathers the same length, on horseback, when he rode. His strangeness was, as is the strangeness of a faun or hamadryad, beings we all know did exist and have their being, so strongly has their personality been drawn for us and petrified in stone.

Occasionally we feel that characters in poems and in pictures are far more real than the sham human beings who go about in millions, pretending to be men.

The subject of my recollection, and how sad it is to rack the half-sealed chambers of the mind for the impressions of dead friends left on it, as the sun leaves pictures, so some think, indelible on every stone, was one of those

whose death strikes us as an injustice and in some way a mistake.

Crossing St. James's Street I well remember seeing on a bill, "Death of the Irish Leader," and thinking that it was some error of the press.

Your politician dies, and it appears quite natural. Last week he had his knighthood; a month ago became the last of all the peers, received the garter at the last royal birthday, and now resumes the sleep which was but three parts broken during the whole course of his life. One pauses, recollects his small peculiarities, his tricks of speech and manner, and then forgets him, half-pitying, half with contempt, thinking an ill-graced actor has passed through the wings, into the freedom of the street, and left behind him nothing but the remembrance of his faults, when once the electro-plated glamour of the daily press has been rubbed off, leaving the tin all bare.

But when a man, such as was Parnell, passes, all the infirmities of life fall off, and only his originality and greatness stay. Then it becomes a marvel that the multitude of rats has been the undoing of the lion. One tries to cipher out in what his influence lay, then gives

it up, and is content to say, "I knew him, may he rest well at last."

In the dull, drab and common world of English life where everything is done upon the lowest level that the intellect of man can compass, in which our Gladdies and our Dizzies, with Pam and Bright and Buckshot Forster and the rest, appear like vestrymen unglorified, a figure such as his seemed almost insolent.

It is too soon perhaps to try to mark his place in history, but since Old Noll (hero in England, and in Ireland devil), perhaps no stronger character has played its part upon the boards of the great theatre at Westminster. He had not eloquence as it is generally appraised, although at times the intensity of hate he bore us and our twaddling institutions, gave him a glacial fire, which scorched even the dull wet-blankets of the House, where all is commonplace.

He was not deeply read, not even in the history of the land for which he fought. He was not humorous, nor had he wit, but now and then inflections came into his voice, which stirred one more than all the spurred-up caperings of orators, as when he finished up a phrase with



“This is going on to-day in Ireland,” in which he put such force and venom that the word Ireland seemed to die upon his lips in froth.

I cannot think of him as popular even at home upon his own estate, nor yet at school, still less with his own followers, especially with those of them who sold their Lord, and quite omitted to make sure the thirty pieces should be paid ; and when they lost them did not have the grace to hang themselves.

Not popular, in the hail-fellow-well-met and loudly cheered conception of the word, but yet with an attraction for all women whom he came across, who were drawn to him by his careless treatment of them, and by the wish that nature has implanted in their sex, to be the rulers of all men who stand above their kind.

Straying about the House of Commons after the fashion of a new boy at a school, I chanced to sit down quite unthinkingly upon a bench. An Irish legislator edged up and whispered, “You’re sitting in his seat.”

To this I answered something about the seats being free unless they had a name attached to them, and I fear bade my interlocutor fare to Gehenna by the shortest route. A gentle voice

behind me almost whispered in my ear, "Quite right, the seats are free."

This laid the first stone to the building of a desultory friendship which lasted till his death.

Occasionally we dined together, not talking very much, as we had nothing very much in common, except a love of horses.

Of them Parnell knew little, and the little that I knew was almost absolutely from the colonial point of view, so that our theories did not conflict, as often happens between friends. On politics we never talked, as upon almost every point we disagreed, he leading a great party, I being a mere unit of an amorphous crowd of Non-conformists, Temperance Reformers, Deceased Wife's Sisters Monomaniacs, and Single Taxers, with all the faddists and the dried fruit of outworn Liberal politics which at that time the tide of Liberalism had left like jelly-fish and seaweed, stranded and dying on the beach.

And what a beach it was, strewn with the dead remains of Leagues and Federations and Societies, mostly composed of Treasurer and Secretary, long-haired and stammering speakers, all with their theories of prompt regeneration for the body politic, and a collecting box to shove beneath the public's nose.

We raved, we ranted, and we called on Englishmen to rise, to embrace the movement and ourselves, and comprehend that social and political emancipation was at hand and that we were the men.

Amongst this herd of addle-brained and sometimes generous, sometimes self-interested reformers (but in all instances belated), which the late lowering of the franchise had let loose upon the world, and most of whom had not sufficient wit to run a coffee-stall, the figure of Parnell stood out, like the Old Man of Hoy stands out against the sea. The little waves of the above referred to muddletonians, who with their iteration damnable and advocacy of reforms long dead, surged round him, almost unnoticed and unnoticeable.

The larger scum of Liberal and Conservative, each again occupied with questions which had long been superannuated, left him unmoved.

The party leaders feared and hated him, for he despised them, and his outlook upon politics seemed but to point out all their lack of strength and incapacity.

Gladstone, who though in talk for fifty years, never contrived to say a single thing either original or worth remembering, was over-

balanced by him, and Salisbury looked on him as Turk looks at a native Christian who rebels, whilst Morley, from the dreary, arid heights of Mount Philosophus, admired and wondered but supported loyally, although perhaps feeling a little hurt at having to play the second violin to one who knew no Greek. Balfour, by virtue of his æstheticism, was repelled, and did not hesitate to shoot out mildly philosophic lips. Churchill admired, and perhaps intrigued with him whom without doubt he thought a rebel, but in politics and love all that succeeds is fair. Chamberlain very likely dreamed of some municipal Home Rule, with Parnell as a county councillor glorified, a parliament for gas and sewage, existing by his will in Dublin, and all the Irish Nationalists, apparelled in frieze coats and battered hats stuck with dudheens, shillelachs in their hands, dancing round and singing "Long live Birmingham!"

No one else counted, and in this motley crew of dreamers and of dullards, with here and there an able man upon the make, to give consistency, the Irish Leader jostled for a place.

Whatever were his faults, and I suppose that being human, he had many of them, one thing is clear to me, that above all he hated England

and her ways. With what a seething coldness, as of ice upon the edges of a crater, he would say "your country" or "your Queen." Even the House of Commons, stupid as it was, would shiver, and red-faced Tory Squires, and Nonconformists reared on seed-cake and lemonade, rise in their seats, shaking their mottled or their plebeian fists at his calm smiling face.

It did us good to hear him stammer through a speech, misquoting all his notes, halting and trying back, and pouring all the vitriol of his contempt upon us as we sat.

It seemed as if some sort of incoherent Daniel had come to judgment and was about to pass his sentence on us all.

The British Parliament for generations had listened to the tirades of all kinds of Irishmen, but they had all been of another sort and different magnitude.

In them, the Saxon was a tyrant and a brute, a sort of Juggernaut, feared and yet envied, who had laid waste the land. But now he figured as an ass, and as ridiculous, whilst all the Irishry, taking their cue from their chief's speeches, publicly thanked their gods that they

were Irish, and professed to think that the word English, applied with reference to themselves, was more than infidel, and quite as bad as Protestant, or thief. Thus did the Chief make it impossible for British ministers to take up the "poor Patrick" attitude, which in the past had always been a trump.

No one, I think, was ever hated by the House as was Parnell, and he returned its hate a hundredfold, taking delight in gibing at it, and making it absurd.

Nothing offended him so much as when some hypocritical "Noncon," whom he and Gladstone had kicked round into Home Rule, would talk about the "union of our hearts," and prophesy that soon all difference of race would be obliterated. Then as he ground his teeth, and his pale cheek grew white with rage, he sometimes muttered "Damn them," with so much unction and such fervency, that one felt sure his prayer, if not immediately vouchsafed, would yet be taken *ad avizandum* as the lawyers say, and perhaps be of avail. But whether it was answered, or fell harmless on the unwholesome air of parliament, it had the effect somehow of setting one a-thinking of

how great a fraud the British Empire was, and rousing one out of the feeling of sublime contentment with ourselves, with which we of the Celto-Saxon race are prone to look at all things here below, knowing that we enjoy a place apart and specially reserved for us in mansions in the skies with all repairs performed for us, by the Creator of the World.

When we debated with much circumstance, and with citation of innumerable unnecessary figures (the ever-present refuge of a dullard in a speech), some weighty matter of a railroad in the Midland Counties, it was a sight to see the Irish Leader lounge into the House, stroking his beard and pulling his moustache with long white fingers, on which dull sparkled his historic sapphire ring. He would remark half confidentially to his lieutenant, "Biggar, I think that this debate ought not to finish before twelve o'clock." To which his Sancho Panza would reply, "It's quite impossible; I've let the boys away." Then, absently, as if he had never seen the man, or at that instant suddenly became aware that he persisted still in living, Parnell would say, "Tell Gallagher to speak." "Gallagher, sir, the only thing he

knows is butter." "Well, let him speak on butter."

And in an instant Gallagher would rise, quite unprepared, and speaking, maybe, for the first time in that august assembly which, as a general rule, strikes us of the predominant partnership stark dumb and curdles all our brains.

With figures and with facts, which all looked feasible, the string-pulled member-marionette would thunder forth on the injustice done to Irish industries in general, and that to Irish butter in particular, by the abominable Bill before the House. After an hour, with perspiration running down his face, he would begin to talk upon the Irish question as a whole, be pulled up by the Speaker, engage in wrangles with the Tories, and speak and speak, with illustrations of his theme, with so much vigour and such aptness, that you began to think a hideous wrong was going to be done. Just about midnight Parnell might saunter in and either say "I think I will not speak," or "Biggar, tell that fool to stop; I wish to say a word." Then word would somehow be conveyed to the rapt orator, who would subside, perhaps in the very middle of a phrase, and



Parnell, rising, would proceed, apparently quite coldly, but with shut fists, and a light foam about the corners of his mouth, to distil vitriol, drop by drop, into the very souls of Englishmen, till Gladstone, putting on his hat, would leave the House, and comfortable Liberals, who had been cultivating a Cork or Limerick brogue, by means of which to show goodwill to Ireland, would shiver in their broadcloth coats, and curse the day that made him their ally.

No one, I think, since Oliver the Great and Good (I write for the mere Englishry), has made the House of Commons tremble to its cowardly depths, as did Parnell, and never Irishman before or since his time, if we except Hugh Roe O'Neill, has ever treated, upon equal terms, with the old English foe.

Undoubtedly, he both despised and hated Gladstone, who on his part showed plainly that he was in the presence of a stronger man, and though after his death he damned him with faint praise, could not have been much disappointed when, after his nine days' waiting, the Nonconformist cat jumped as it did, and shut Home Rule off for a hundred years.

Not that I think that Gladstone did not believe in Ireland's wrongs, but that he did not

wish to see an Irish parliament led by a man far stronger than himself.

During the days of *sturm und drang* when he was fighting for his soul, I saw him now and then as one sees figures in a dream.

Once seated in an old-fashioned eating-house off the Strand, he wandered in, and seeing me, sat down and talked during the dinner which he could not eat. We spoke of horses, of which, as I have said, he knew but little, and I not overmuch, and then sauntered down to the House, to find it counted out.

Then came his death and funeral, with as it seemed, no one ashamed in Ireland, and almost everybody secretly pleased in London, as if they felt an enemy of England was gone, as in fact was the case, for he who lets a Briton see he does not reverence him and his country, commits the crime against the British Holy Ghost, a spirit plethoric and heavy, generous but overbearing, and as well stuffed with pride as is an airship or a fire-balloon with gas.

Let him sleep well, a Protestant amongst the serried graves of those who lie looking towards Rome, whilst they await the Trumpet's call. A Saxon leader of a Celtic race, a man who, though no orator, yet held enthralled a parlia-

ment that lives on talk. Well may his spirit hover hesitatingly between the towers of Westminster, where he enforced respect, and the grey columns upon College Green, the unfaithful Mecca, which he never lived to reach.

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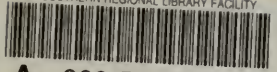
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